

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**THE RISE AND FALL OF THE HYBRID REGIME:
GUARDIANSHIP AND DEMOCRACY
IN IRAN AND TURKEY**

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This research project has two interconnected goals. First, it attempts to unpack and redefine ‘hybrid regimes’ – a concept that has emerged from the ‘third wave’ democratisation literature in the late 1990s and shares with this literature its underlying cultural, ideological and teleological assumptions. I start with a critique of these dominant assumptions and point to the need to rethink hybrid regimes outside of these parameters. I then propose a more limited and lucid definition for hybrid regimes as political systems built on two contesting sources of legitimacy – elitist and popular – and corresponding institutions of guardianship and democracy. Hybrid regimes, in other words, are not ‘diminished democracies’ or ‘competitive autocracies’, but an altogether separate regime type that feature clearly defined tutelary and electoral institutions. Based on this redefinition, I present five hypotheses regarding the dynamics of change in hybrid regimes, which are subsequently applied to the two case studies: the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey.

The second goal of the thesis is to present a new comparative framework to analyse the post-Cold War dynamics of change in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey, two countries with political systems that scholars have found difficult to categorise and observers often treated as polar opposites due to their seemingly inimical official ideologies, Khomeinism and Kemalism. Through studying their hybrid institutional characteristics and the role of structural factors and human agency at the critical political junctures that the two countries experienced in the late 1990s and the 2000s, I endeavour to contribute to the scholarly discussion on the dynamics of interaction and legitimation between popular and elite rule.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

- ADD – Atatürkist Thought Association (*Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği*, Turkey)
- AKP - Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, Turkey)
- ANAP – Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, Turkey)
- AP – Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*, Turkey)
- CHP – Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, Turkey)
- CUP – Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Fırkası*, Turkey)
- ÇYD – Association in Support of Contemporary Living (*Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Vakfı*, Turkey)
- DP – Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti*, Turkey)
- DSP – Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*, Turkey)
- DTP – Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*, Turkey)
- DYP – True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*, Turkey)
- EC – Expediency Discernment Council of the Order (*Majma'-e Tashkhis-e Maslahat-e Nezam*, Iran)
- FP – Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*, Turkey)
- GC – Guardian Council (*Shora-ye Negahban-e Qanun-e Assasi*, Iran)
- GNA – Grand National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisi*, Turkey)
- IRGC – Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (*Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enqelab-e Islami*, Iran)
- IRI – Islamic Republic of Iran
- IRP - Islamic Republican Party (*Hezb-e Jomhoori-ye Islami*, Iran)
- İP – Worker’s Party (*İşçi Partisi*, Turkey)
- JITEM - Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism (*Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele*, Turkey)

- JRM – Society of the Militant Clergy (*Jame'e-ye Rouhaniyat-e Mobarez*, Iran)
- MEK – People's Mojahedin of Iran (*Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran*, Iran)
- MHP – Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, Turkey)
- MİT - National Intelligence Agency (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, Turkey)
- MRM – Association of Combatant Clerics (*Majma'-e Rouhaniyun-e Mobarez*, Iran)
- NSC – National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*, Turkey)
- NSPD – National Security Policy Document (*Milli Güvenlik Siyaseti Belgesi*, Turkey)
- OYAK – Armed Forces Pension Fund (*Ordu Yardımlaşma Kurumu*, Turkey)
- PKK – Kurdistan Worker's Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, Turkey)
- PRP – Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, Turkey)
- RP – Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, Turkey)
- RTÜK – Higher Council of Radio and Television (*Radyo Televizyon Üst Kurulu*, Turkey)
- SCC – Special Court of the Clergy (*Dadgah-e Vizheh-ye Rouhaniyat*, Iran)
- SCFR – Strategic Council for Foreign Relations (*Shora-ye Rahbordi-ye Ravabet-e Khareji*, Iran)
- SNSC – Supreme National Security Council (*Shora-ye Ali-ye Amniat-e Melli*, Iran)
- SSC – State Security Courts (*Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri*, Turkey)
- TSK – Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*, Turkey)
- YAŞ – Supreme Military Council (*Yüksek Askeri Şura*, Turkey)
- YÖK – Council of Higher Education (*Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu*, Turkey)

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Only the mistakes in this work are entirely mine.

INTRODUCTION

Research goals

This research project has two interconnected goals. First, it attempts to unpack and redefine ‘hybrid regimes’ – a concept that is born out of the ‘third wave’ democratisation literature and shares with this literature its underlying cultural, ideological and teleological assumptions. Secondly, on the basis of this new definition, it presents a new comparative framework to analyse the post-Cold War dynamics of political change in the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) and the Republic of Turkey, two countries with political systems that scholars have found difficult to categorise and observers often treated as polar opposites due to their seemingly inimical official ideologies, Khomeinism and Kemalism.

‘Hybrid regime’ is a useful concept to make sense of the vast ‘grey area’ between the theoretically perfect democracy and the theoretically absolute dictatorship. However, it has been based on vague and conflicting definitions and thus has come to mean everything and nothing at the same time. Starting with a critique of the dominant assumptions of the democratisation literature, I redefine hybrid regimes not as diminished types of autocracy or corrupted democracies, i.e. fragile “halfway-houses” that have stalled in their democratic transitions (Huntington 1991a: 598), but rather as fairly stable entities that were founded, legitimised and consolidated as hybrid. In other words, instead of presuming that they are inherently democratic or inherently authoritarian, I conceptualise hybrid regimes as a separate regime type altogether, simultaneously consisting of clearly defined and demarcated authoritarian and electoral institutions.

Hybrid regimes, to be more specific, embody two contending visions of government within the same institutional structure: guardianship and democracy. Deeply distrustful of the masses, guardianship – or rule by self-

proclaimed philosopher kings – challenges the basic democratic idea that ordinary human beings are capable of understanding and defending their own interests. From Plato’s conceptualisation of government as a “royal art or science” to Lenin’s “vanguard party” shepherding the proletariat, the notion that only a select minority can possess the skills, virtues and knowledge necessary to govern on behalf of the people has been a powerful and attractive vision throughout history. One of the most distinguished scholars of democratic theory of our age, who passed away as I was concluding this thesis, Robert Dahl considered guardianship as the “perennial alternative” and “the most formidable rival” to democracy (1989: 52).

Dahl also described guardianship as a “fundamentally different *kind* of regime” than democracy and not just a mere modification of it (1989: 57). But while there are extensive studies that focus on democratic and non-democratic regimes separately, less attention has been devoted to modern political arrangements that accommodate both of these inimical visions of government. How do these ‘hybrid’ systems attempt to reconcile in theory and practice the division of sovereignty between the *demos* and the *aristos*? Does the assumed conflict between guardianship and democracy render the hybrid regime inherently unstable, prone to institutional rivalries, frequent systemic crises and ultimately regime change? Or can these regimes achieve a desirable equilibrium by weeding out the excesses of democracy’s populism and guardianship’s elitism? More practically, when and how does a system become/cease to be hybrid? These constitute my preliminary research questions.

Methodological framework and challenges

This thesis attempts to contribute to an understanding of the causes, the dynamics and the outcomes of processes of change in hybrid regimes through an in-depth comparative analysis of two case studies. As a qualitative work, it draws its sources from the official statements, interviews, writings and memoirs of key actors; news articles, governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental reports; as well as from personal, journalistic and scholarly accounts of close contemporary observers of these processes. Indeed, a considerable number of

the books and academic articles that make up the extensive list of secondary sources used in this research also qualify as eye-witness accounts as they demonstrate the changing perspectives and analytical frameworks prevalent within the scholarly, journalistic and political circles in and outside of these countries during the periods under study.

As is often the issue with qualitative works looking at a small number of cases, a particular challenge for this work has been to acquire and present a fairly balanced and in-depth understanding of the two cases. Whereas one of these cases, Turkey, concerns my native country and language, my personal and linguistic access to Iran had been rather limited prior to this research. To offset this imbalance, I focused on improving my Persian both in London and in Iran, where I enrolled in the language department of the University of Isfahan in late 2010. At the same time, the contemporary political scope of the thesis presented an altogether different challenge: that of distancing myself from the events and dynamics that I witnessed first-hand, in order to present a dispassionate scholarly account. Not surprisingly, this proved to be more difficult in the case of Turkey than Iran.

The analytical framework employed in this research draws from Comparative Historical Institutionalism. The question of political change is essentially a question of authority, and more specifically, legitimate authority. At its core, politics is the contestation, negotiation and legitimisation of power by representatives of various socio-economic and political interest groups. All democratic and non-democratic regimes endeavour to establish and project an image of popular legitimacy in the eyes of the people and other governments. That being said, the domestic criteria and definitions of legitimate authority tend to vary across the board. An act of government considered deeply illegitimate in one context may be perceived as legitimate in another.

How, then, to identify these varying criteria, analyse the process of contestation and negotiation of power, and determine whether or not a threshold of legitimacy has been crossed at a given moment? Studying institutions from a comparative historical perspective helps us in this endeavour. By institutions, I refer to “formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating practices” (Hall 1986: 19), as well as “overarching structures of state”

(Ikenberry, Lake and Mastaduno 1988: 226). The emergence and evolution of institutions reflect the impact of and the symbiotic relationship between human agency and structure.

The relationship between institutions and human agency has been the focus of historical institutionalism. In their influential volume laying the groundwork of this approach, Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth argue that “institutions that are at the centre of historical institutional analyses [...] can shape and constrain political strategies in important ways, but they are themselves also the outcome (conscious or unintended) of deliberate political strategies, of political conflict, and of choice.” (1992: 10). Decisions of key political actors, leadership skills, individual or group choices can play a vital role in influencing the process and the outcome of change. Human agency, especially at certain critical junctures, may rapidly and decisively alter the future course of events, i.e. shape path dependence.¹ While actor choices are not pre-ordained, they are influenced and informed by the prevailing institutional characteristics.

Slow moving structural dynamics, such as cultural codes, perceptions of history, geopolitical, demographic and economic factors, constitute the underlying third dimension of change, shaping both institutions and actor choices. The fact that structural factors (especially culture and history) are less tangible, hence harder to observe, account for and quantify, has increasingly led students of political ‘science’ to tiptoe around the boundaries of this risky zone, without venturing inside. Yet despite its obvious risks and difficulties, this is a task that modern scholarship has to shoulder. Students of politics cannot afford to ignore structure entirely and avoid asking big questions, simply because some of these questions appear unquantifiable. Indeed as Rustow (1970: 347) argued, the study of transitions “will take the political scientist deeper into history than he has been commonly willing to go.”

Admittedly, attaching too little or too much emphasis on structure are both equally problematic, as the democratisation literature has demonstrated

¹ Path dependence implies that “crucial actor choices may establish certain directions of change and foreclose others in a way that shapes long-term trajectories of development.” Such choices have particularly profound impact during critical junctures, which Mahoney defines as “historical spaces, moments, arenas of change, which produce a struggle for new spatial reference points and in which a new segmentation of the polity becomes evident.” (2001: xi, 6)

time and again. As Chapter 1 will discuss in detail, both the universalism of the 'no preconditions' approach and the essentialism of the 'clash of civilisations' perspective have their pitfalls. The middle ground between universalism and cultural relativism is often elusive, and a fine line separates cultural relativism from cultural essentialism. Yet it is also imperative that this middle ground is found and treaded.

The key to succeeding in this pursuit may lie in recognising that history, culture, society and geopolitics matter, but that these are fluid and porous 'dynamics' rather than static all-encompassing monoliths. In this endeavour, adapting Laurence Whitehead's "floating but anchored" conceptualisation of democracy to our wider framework might prove useful (2002: 6). We could be 'floating' in our diverse structural contexts yet 'anchored' in our shared humanity. Put in less ambiguous terms, when examining political change anywhere, we can be confident that in each geographic case, there will be popular demand for physical security and economic well-being, as well as for justice, fairness and an 'honourable' life. Specifically how these demands are defined, expressed, communicated, prioritised, negotiated and institutionalised, however, will depend in part on a complex and fluid set of historical, cultural, socio-economic and geopolitical factors that fluctuate across time and space.²

History, culture, and underlying economic and geopolitical factors inform social perceptions of identity, authority and legitimacy, which in turn help shape institutions and ultimately affect agency. We have, in other words, three concentric layers of interdependence, in which human agency, the micro level, and structural dynamics, the macro level, both influence each other, with institutions in the middle transmitting and reflecting the outcome and thus serving as an 'analytical bridge' between the two. This understanding forms the basic conceptual framework of this research.

² "Does the term 'democracy' carry just the same connotations after the end of the cold war as it used to in a bipolar world? Is the core meaning of the word really identical in Chinese, or in Arabic, to its meaning in English, or in Greek?" (Whitehead 2002: 8). Sen adopts a more universalistic approach: "The championing of pluralism, diversity, and basic liberties can be found in the history of many societies. The long tradition of encouraging and protecting public debates on political, social and cultural matters in, say, India, China, Japan, Korea, Iran, Turkey, the Arab world, and many parts of Africa, demand much fuller recognition in the history of democratic ideas." (2003: 29 – 30).

Case studies

Consistently defying categorisation by scholars of politics, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran make compelling case studies for hybrid regimes. Ever since the Iranian revolution in 1979, the popular tendency within and outside academia has been to treat these two countries as polar opposites, representing two irreconcilable paths to modernisation and development. On one side was Turkey, a secular and pro-western multiparty democracy, despite its various shortcomings; on the other side was Iran, a vehemently anti-western theocracy. Political elites in Iran and Turkey certainly contributed to this binary perception by demonising the other country's ruling elite as either backward Islamic radicals or as godless imitators of the West, although these portrayals were typically meant for domestic consumption and did not constitute the basis of the countries' bilateral relations.

Still, the scholarship dealing with the two countries frequently took on board this dichotomisation with little scrutiny. This has been the predominant international relations approach to the two countries, and a large part of the academic work dealing with both countries has been IR-based.³ Of the handful of existing English language comparative works on Iran and Turkey, from both historical and political disciplines, only one has a full chapter devoted to the institutions of guardianship.⁴ In other words, there is an evident gap in the literature looking at Iran and Turkey from a comparative perspective and focusing on their hybrid institutional architectures.

The Turkish Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran are the successor regimes to the two imperial power centres of the Muslim Middle East, the Ottoman and Iranian empires, which had found themselves at the political, economic and cultural periphery of the West (and Russia) by the nineteenth century. They are the products of popular movements led by charismatic leaders, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Ayatollah Khomeini, who were convinced that they

³ See for example, Özbudun (1990), Rubenstein and Smolansky (1995), Barkey (1996) and Olson (2004).

⁴ This is 'Chapter 5: The Guardians and Elections in Iran and Turkey' in Tezcür (2010). Other comparative works include Atabaki and Zürcher (2004), Kamali (2006), Atabaki (2007) and Sohrabi (2011).

possessed the necessary wisdom and vision to liberate the country and transform society from above; arriving at parallel conclusions through markedly different intellectual paths. The Kemalist and Khomeinist republics embodied simultaneously elitist and popular characteristics from their inception, which became manifest following the charismatic leaders' deaths.

While both republics routinely hosted competitive popular elections with unpredictable outcomes and direct impact on policymaking and power sharing, the contestation took place within the boundaries drawn by various institutions of regime guardianship. In Kemalist Turkey, the military and the high judiciary acted as the key institutions of guardianship, vigilantly preserving the regime's basic principles (and their own privileged socio-political status) through staging periodic coups, ousting elected governments, banning parties and politicians, and amending and enforcing the constitution. In Iran, a full range of republican institutions function in the shadow of an Islamic guardianship pillar, which is structured upon Khomeini's novel idea of *velayat-e faqih* (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurisprudent). This guardianship pillar is made up of institutions such as the Office of the Supreme Leader, the Council of Guardians and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. In both polities, certain policy areas (such as determining the main contours of foreign policy) have been traditionally outside the remit of elected officials and within the 'reserved domains' of the guardians. That said the expanse of these domains and the boundary between the two pillars have been negotiated and contested continuously and therefore have remained in flux. These moments of negotiation, contestation and fluctuation constitute a key area of this research, as they are instrumental to understanding the dynamics of change in hybrid regimes.

The thesis is organised in the following order: Chapter 1 provides the theoretical framework and redefines hybrid regimes. Chapter 2 looks into the structural factors that inform social and institutional perceptions of legitimate and patriarchal authority in Iran and Turkey. Chapter 3 examines the agency of Atatürk and Khomeini; the role of their charismatic leadership, pragmatic politics and ideological legacy in shaping the hybrid architecture and the elite factions that have defined Turkish and Iranian politics after their deaths. Chapter 4 analyses and compares the two republics' institutional architecture and elite

factions as they became consolidated as hybrid regimes. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the power struggles between the two pillars (and the political factions that cut across them) and especially on the challenges that elected governments mounted on conservative guardians from the late 1990s onwards in both countries. Finally, Chapter 7 reviews the nature and the dynamics of transition from, and back to, hybridity.

I am particularly interested in why these contemporaneous challenges yielded highly divergent results: in Turkey, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) government succeeded in dismantling Kemalist guardianship during the 2000s. In Iran, the traditionalist guardians not only managed to thwart and suppress reformist and neo-conservative challenges, but also expanded their grip over the electoral institutions to such a degree as to undermine the regime's democratic legitimacy. In other words, with elected officials triumphant over the guardians in Turkey and the guardians having suppressed popular challenges to their authority in Iran, I argue that both regimes ceased to be hybrid at the end of the 2000s.

While this picture would seem to imply the existence of simultaneous processes of democratisation in Turkey and authoritarian clampdown in Iran, a review of the post-hybrid dynamics of both countries exposes the shortcomings of this linear assumption. In Iran, the election of Hassan Rouhani in June 2013 signalled a return to hybridity by restoring the integrity of the electoral process, which had been damaged after the contested 2009 presidential poll. Despite their bitter splits following the 2009 election, restoration of hybridity appears to have been favoured by all major factional leaders, at a time when the Khomeinist regime was facing a popular legitimacy crisis, severe economic instability and a volatile geopolitical environment. Meanwhile from the ruins of Kemalist guardianship in Turkey emerged an increasingly authoritarian one-party government, driven by religious nationalist patriarchal instincts and a strictly minimalistic interpretation of democracy. The Turkish experience demonstrates that it is misleading to conceptualise unelected guardians as the sole impediment to democratisation, which requires a more profound shift in the culture of government, including among elected officials.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DEMOCRATISATION, GUARDIANSHIP AND THE HYBRID REGIME

Introduction

Almost all the well-known works on hybrid regimes produced in political studies over the past three decades are grounded in the contemporary literature on democracies and democratic transitions. This means, for the most part, that the underlying assumptions that have influenced this wider literature also define the parameters of the scholarly discussion on hybrid regimes. I start this chapter with a critique of the dominant cultural, ideological and teleological assumptions of the democratisation literature, and point to the need to rethink hybrid regimes outside of these parameters. I then propose a more limited and lucid definition for hybrid regimes as political systems built on two contesting sources of legitimacy – elitist and popular – and corresponding institutions of guardianship and democracy. This redefinition will also liberate us from the geographic and temporal limitations of the democratisation literature as well as from the tendency to conceptualise hybrid regimes as either corrupted democracies or diminished autocracies. Finally, based on this redefinition, I present five hypotheses regarding the dynamics of change in hybrid regimes that are applied to the Iranian and Turkish cases.

The long shadow of the 'third wave': Democratisation and the transition literature

Two major debates

Any work on democratisation today will be hard put not to refer to Samuel Huntington's 'third wave' theory. Huntington argued in his same-titled 1991 book that democratisation takes places in international waves. The so-called third wave of democratisation started with the collapse of military dictatorships in Southern Europe and Latin America in the 1970s and 80s, which was followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the transition of socialist one-party systems of Central and Eastern Europe into free-market economies in the early 1990s. Huntington built his theory upon the existing literature on transitions from authoritarian rule, particularly drawing from Juan Linz's earlier observations regarding the role of political elites in affecting the course of transformations (*'reforma'*) or replacements (*'ruptura'*) (Huntington 1991b; Linz 2000). While other scholarly works during the same period also had significant impact on the current academic debate,⁵ the 'third wave' became the dominant conceptual framework in democratisation studies, especially in the United States, where in the post-Cold War euphoria of the 1990s academics and policymakers celebrated 'the end of history' and the global triumph of US-led free market capitalism and liberal democracy.

Two debates have been key to studies on democracy and democratisation: the first revisits the classical discussion on how democracy should be defined and measured. Contributors to this debate draw their arguments from a wide range of sources, including references to the Greco-Roman experiences of direct and representative government, as well as quantitative tools borrowed from econometrics and social statistics.⁶ Two general approaches can be identified here: the first is the 'minimalist' or 'procedural' approach, typically associated with Joseph Schumpeter's 'electoralist' definition, Robert Dahl's 'Polyarchy', as well as definitions by

⁵ Such as O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986), and Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1988).

⁶ A good overview and discussion can be found in O'Donnell (2010) and in Whitehead (2002).

Huntington and Adam Przeworski, all of which focus on various institutional and procedural arrangements surrounding competitive elections.⁷ A second group of scholars have regarded these procedural criteria at once too limiting and insufficient, and the focus on the ballot box excessive. Instead they set out for a definition that is both 'substantive' and captures 'the essence' of democracy across time and space – a “floating but anchored” definition in the words of Whitehead (2002: 6). Scholars such as David Held (1996), John Rawls (1997), Mary Kaldor and Ivan Vejvoda (1997) and Amartya Sen (2003) have contributed to the view that 'proper' or 'substantive' democracy should be seen as a process of 'public reasoning, discussion, and deliberation' that is open-ended and continually self-reproducing, rather than just a process of conducting elections.

The second debate within the field is concerned with the process of transitions to democracy. More practical in focus and closely engaged in international democracy promotion, the overarching goal of 'transitology' has been to identify generalisable steps or categories to explain processes of regime change. These works tend to be more micro in focus, mostly observing actors and events within specific periods of socio-political change, rather than long term structural dynamics. In one of the earlier attempts to construct a model for transitions, Dankwart Rustow (1970) identified one background condition and three phases of transition, “each assembled one at a time, with their separate protagonists.” Other influential arguments were presented by O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986), as well as Huntington (1991a; 1991b) and Fukuyama (1995). It is particularly (though not exclusively) within this debate, and especially in moments of collusion between academia and policy making, that the abovementioned cultural, ideological, teleological assumptions have been most visible and influential.

⁷ Schumpeter's competitive election theory can be summarised as “that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.” (Schumpeter 1943; quoted in O'Donnell 2010: 13 – 14). Arguing that no existing system can be labelled democratic, Dahl opted for the term 'polyarchy', which he defined as “relatively (but incompletely) democratized regimes,” that are “substantially popularized and liberalized, that is, highly inclusive and extensively open to public contestation.” (Dahl 1971: 8). Huntington's definition pointed to a political system that exists “to the extent that its most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote.” (1991b: 7). Przeworski defines democracy as a system in which “incumbents lose elections and leave office if they do.” (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi 2000: 50 – 51).

Dominant assumptions and practical implications

Is democracy culturally-specific? Does it only work in the framework of a particular economic model? Is democratisation an inevitable historical process? Have the practical applications of policy suggestions drawn from transition studies produced outcomes that are conducive or detrimental to the institutionalisation of democratic systems around the world? These questions have long sparked divisive and inconclusive debates within and outside academia. It would be both unfair and inaccurate to attribute one set of answers to the existing literature as a whole. That said, it is probably fair to suggest that among various influential proponents of the third wave argument, and their followers in academia and the policy-making world, there has been an enduring tendency to treat democracy as a cultural product of the West that is strictly associated with free market capitalism, and to conceptualise transitions from authoritarianism as inevitable phenomena occurring within one-size-fits-all models.

In his influential essay declaring the ‘end of the transition paradigm’, Thomas Carothers argued that “the dynamism and the remarkable scope of the third wave buried old, deterministic, and often culturally noxious assumptions about democracy, such as that only countries with an American-style middle class or a heritage of Protestant individualism can become democratic.”⁸ Scholars of the third wave, he pointed out, “enthusiastically banished” the Cold-War idea that a country was not ready or lacked the preconditions for democracy (2002: 16). Yet, conversely, the new vision also had in it perhaps less implicit cultural stereotypes and broad-brush assumptions, some of which harked back at an earlier age of the ‘enlightening mission of the West’, assuming that the Anglo-Saxon liberal democracy, a very specific social and historical experience indeed, held universal appeal and applicability. In other words, one set of ‘culturally noxious assumptions’ was traded for another.

⁸ Carothers identifies five assumptions, which he argues had crashed by the early 2000s: that there is a linear path between authoritarianism and democracy; that democratisation unfolds in a set sequence of stages; the determinative importance of elections; that there are no underlying preconditions for democratisation; and that the third wave transitions are being built on coherent, functioning states. (2002: 8)

In fact, not all of these broad-brush assumptions were so implicit. For instance, in his 1995 essay titled “The Primacy of Culture”, Fukuyama listed four potential challengers to liberal democracy: paternalistic Asian authoritarianism (identified as the most serious challenge to liberal democracy); extreme nationalism or fascism (in the context of the mid-90s, a threat predominantly viewed as disseminating from the countries of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia); Islam (a complex and multifaceted phenomenon reduced by Fukuyama to a uniform geopolitical threat to democracy); and a revived neo-Bolshevism (former Soviet Union and Latin America). In other words, having divided the globe into monolithic cultural zones, Fukuyama identified each region outside the western world as the source of one type of anti-democratic model or another.⁹

Not alien to designating civilisational boundaries, Huntington’s evolving relationship with culture presents an even more compelling story. Advising US governments to support modernising authoritarian rulers in the interest of security and stability and thus leading the ‘not ready for democracy’ front during the Cold War (1968), Huntington became an avid supporter of US-sponsored democratisation projects in the early 1990s, issuing step-by-step ‘guidelines’ to democratisers for reforming or overthrowing authoritarian regimes (1991b: 601 – 616). It was perhaps his gradual disillusionment with the fate of the third wave that pushed Huntington to publish his popular and controversial “Clash of Civilizations” thesis in 1996.¹⁰ Indeed, Carothers notes that during the course of the 1990s, the ‘no preconditions’ assumption of the third wave literature had become sufficiently questioned by scholars who brought “economic welfare, social class, institutional legacies and other structural factors” back into the field. Even so, “it has been hard for the democracy-promotion community to take this work on board”, largely because of the difficulty or the inconvenience of reforming policies and organisations built upon this process-focused methodology (2002: 16).

⁹ Fukuyama’s generalisations often pushed the boundaries of vulgar cultural caricaturisation. “Obviously,” he wrote, “Asian authoritarianism is a ‘regional’ phenomenon no less than fascism or Islam.” Casually switching between Islam and Islamic fundamentalism, he declared political Islam as unappealing for anyone not ‘culturally Islamic’ to begin with (1995:10 – 11).

¹⁰ The term was originally used by Bernard Lewis in his 1990 article titled “The Roots of Muslim Rage”.

The same observation stands for the prevailing ideological bias of the so-called 'democracy-promotion community'. When US President Ronald Reagan and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher heralded and were celebrated for leading a 'global democratic revolution' in the 1980s, this was in part a reference to the inclusion of new free-market economies into the capitalist 'free world', at times through violent and undemocratic methods, rather than the establishment of meaningful and popularly-rooted democratic institutions and practices.¹¹ When, among others, Fukuyama traces the birth of the third wave to "the coming to power of free-market finance ministers in Latin America" in the 1970s and the 80s, he effectively crowns as democratisers the 'Chicago Boys', a group of US-educated economists who oversaw sweeping market liberalisation and privatisation programmes under the right-wing military dictatorships of Chile and Argentina, both backed by Washington against the left, despite their systematic human rights abuses (1995: 8). The link between democratisation and free market reforms in Latin America remains contested to say the least (Panizza 2009).

The ideological bias for economic liberalisation did not wane with the end of the Cold War; if anything it became ubiquitous, with free-market reforms and privatisation projects widely perceived and promoted as the institutional requisite of transitions to democracy in the developing world.¹² Yet although the correlation between economic liberalism and democratisation in the age of globalisation is tenuous at best (and inverse, at worst), the widespread assumption that free market reforms and democratisation are interlinked has led to skewed conclusions about the merits and shortcomings of various systems of governance.¹³ Whitehead notes that "leading Western democracies attempt to celebrate the progress achieved in the countries closest to their control, and to castigate the political deficiencies of those regimes they disapprove for other

¹¹ See Ronald Reagan's State of the Union address, 25 January 1988. For a retrospective celebration of this "worldwide democratic revolution" see Ledeen (1996).

¹² "The deft implicit insertion of liberal into many current accepted uses of democracy suggests a struggle – unsuccessful to date – over granting ineliminable-component status to a new, tacitly implied notion." (Whitehead 2002: 14). Also see Freedman (1994: 140 – 164).

¹³ One evidence to this tenuous link may be the resurgence since the late 1990s of a wide range of leftist political movements in Latin America within a democratic framework but largely in reaction to the perceived social injustices and inequalities attributed to neoliberal policies of the previous 25 years. See Panizza (2005) and Cleary (2006).

reasons.” (2009: 234). Turkey and Iran are two cases in point. As long as Turkey remained a western-oriented free-market economy, the popular tendency within government, media and academic circles in the West has been to downplay the illiberal character and the human rights violations of the Turkish state and its Kemalist guardians, while at the same time emphasising these in Iran, even when the state of the Turkish democracy appeared bleaker than its Iranian counterpart, such as in the late 1990s.

Finally, enthusiasts of the third wave inherited another Cold War relic, albeit this time from their defeated Marxist counterparts: historical dialectics and a utopian belief in the end of time. The triumph of the West and the proliferation of pro-market electoral regimes in the late 1980s and the early 90s led to the conviction that history progressed in a linear fashion from authoritarianism towards liberal democracy.¹⁴ This teleological assumption, in turn, infused a new type of messianic faith into politics, especially in the US and the UK, and encouraged interventions across the world for the sake of the liberal democratic utopia. Although the excitement in the imminent ‘end of history’ somewhat lost its appeal as the third wave gradually lost steam and authoritarian governments with liberal façades appeared increasingly consolidated, the teleological undertone of transitology has remained firmly in place.¹⁵

Considered in unison, these prevalent cultural, ideological and teleological assumptions have effectively reduced the field of democratisation (at least its most visible mainstream) into a propaganda platform for the millenarian strand of western (neo)liberalism. They also led the scholarship to shoot wide off the mark time and again, as non-democracies were declared democracies and stable systems labelled as transitional. But it is in the practical application of this

¹⁴ “Tough its origins are in trends in thought and policy that developed earlier, rightwing utopianism was massively boosted by the collapse of communism. The communist regimes were meant to be an advance guard of a new type of society that would replace all earlier models. The western states that emerged as victors in the Cold War embarked on a similar project. With a triumphal America in the lead they committed themselves to building a worldwide economic system. Having rendered every other economic system obsolete, global capitalism would bring about the end of history. [...] In fact, as could be foreseen, history resumed on traditional lines.” (Gray 2007: 41)

¹⁵ Carothers opines that this persistence, particularly among US democracy-promotion circles, “of using transitional language to characterize countries that in no way conform to any democratization paradigm borders in some cases on the surreal.” (2002: 14)

strand that we come across some of its most disastrous consequences. Rwanda in the early 1990s serves as an example of how imposing one-size-fits-all transition models, built upon the basis of a minimalist understanding of democracy and imposed without regard to prevailing structural conditions, can go terribly wrong (Mann 2005). Likewise, the ‘shock therapy’ market liberalisation and privatisation reforms promoted in Russia during the 1990s did not only bring about socio-economic disaster in that country, but also largely delegitimised its nascent democratisation project.¹⁶ Overall, the idea that a global liberal democratic order could be established by a combination of aid agencies, economic incentives and military threats has been found wanting.

Even if one could attribute the ‘mishaps’ of liberal interventionism and democracy promotion of the 1990s to post-Cold War triumphalism, naïve idealism and inexperience, it is harder to justify the picture that emerged in the 2000s. That the US-led ‘war on terror’ was carried out under the banner of defending liberty at home and spreading democracy abroad has discredited both democracy and liberalism. As liberties were systematically curtailed in the USA and the UK for the sake of national security, the governments of these countries manipulated their own citizens, eschewed international law and committed systematic human rights abuses abroad in the name of democracy and freedom. Embarrassingly for the field, few mainstream observers in the English speaking world sounded the alarm about the deteriorating state of democracy in the West during this period, as they were either caught up in or discouraged by the wave of patriotism surrounding the ‘global war on terror’, or too preoccupied with the unfolding ‘colour revolutions’ in Ukraine, Georgia and Lebanon and the ‘coercive democratisation’ of Iraq after 2003.

The extensive human toll and social dislocation that followed the US occupation of Iraq, along with the flat-out western rejection of the outcome of the 2006 Palestinian election – one of the fairest and most transparent polls to take place in the Arab world to that date – have reduced the meaning of democracy, especially when coming from western officials, to a cover-up word for geopolitical opportunism in the eyes of many of its reluctant recipients.¹⁷

¹⁶ See “Chapter 5: Who Lost Russia?” in Stiglitz (2002).

¹⁷ The Iraqi debacle even prompted Fukuyama to defect from the neo-conservative camp (2006).

Unfortunately, despite early hopes for the contrary, such scepticism appeared to be vindicated by the reaction of many of the world's leading democracies to the Arab uprisings in 2011, judging by the strategic manner in which some anti-government protests (such as those in Libya and Syria) were much more readily portrayed as 'pro-democracy' than others (such as in Bahrain or Yemen), and the selective policy outcomes of these portrayals.

Unpacking and rethinking hybrid regimes

Steering clear of the 'terminological Babel'

By the mid-to-late 1990s, as the pace and the extent of political transitions appeared to lose steam across the world, the enthusiasm surrounding the third wave democratisations also started to disappear. The assumption that democratisation was the inevitable outcome of historical progress came under increasing scrutiny (Diamond 1996). A large number of authoritarian regimes had taken some liberalising steps but had stopped short of meaningful democratisation. Contrary to earlier expectations, it became apparent that these 'halfway houses' could stand after all.¹⁸ Realising that they could no longer be considered in a state of transition, observers pointed to the need to come up with new categorisation to describe those political systems located in the so-called 'grey zone' between authoritarianism and democracy. The hybrid regime literature emerged out of this realisation.

As early as in 1971, Dahl observed the existence of a "large space in the middle" that was neither named nor subdivided. "The absence of names," he suggested, "partly reflects the historic tendency to classify regimes in terms of extreme types. [...] The lack of nomenclature does not mean a lack of regimes; in fact, perhaps the preponderant number of national regimes in the world today

¹⁸ It was Huntington who argued that "the experience of the third wave strongly suggests that liberalized authoritarianism is not a stable equilibrium; the halfway house does not stand." (1991b; 598)

would fall into the mid-area.”¹⁹ In order to refer to regimes in this large grey area, Dahl resorted to the terms ‘near’ and ‘nearly’, i.e. a ‘nearly hegemonic regime’ or ‘near-polyarchy’. In 1988, Diamond, Linz and Lipset acknowledged that “the boundary between democratic and nondemocratic is sometimes a blurred and imperfect one, and beyond it lies a much broader range of variation in political systems” (xvii). The term ‘hybrid regime’ came into use during the mid-1990s to denote this broad, unnamed and undivided space in the middle.

Looking at the political systems of Central America, Terry Karl introduced the term in 1995 and defined it as “a certain functional and territorial mix”, which represented “a genuine advance from the [authoritarian] past and a significant step in the long-range process of building democracy.” (1995: 74). In the beginning the very concept of hybrid regime also had a vague and elusive definition, just as the space it was meant to describe.²⁰ Then gradually the scholarship engaged in an attempt to define, distinguish, measure, rank and categorise different types of hybrid regimes. This led to the proliferation of new subcategories, or ‘regimes with adjectives’, creating in effect a “terminological Babel” in transition studies (Armony and Schamis 2005).

During the second half of the 1990s, hybrid regimes were increasingly considered as types of diminished democracies, i.e. regimes that fulfilled some of the basic or minimal requirements of democratic governance (typically, they held reasonably competitive elections) but suffered from other democratic deficits, such as limitations on freedom of expression and access to alternative information sources, existence of unelected tutelary bodies imposing limitations on elected officials, low levels of citizens’ participation in the political process, and/or various other coercive factors that tilted the playing field in the favour of the incumbents. A plethora of new subtypes emerged in order to define these diminished democracies, including O’Donnell’s “delegative democracy” (1994), Diamond, Linz and Lipset’s “semi-democracy” (1995), and Zakaria’s “illiberal

¹⁹ Dahl also acknowledged that “the arbitrariness of the boundaries between ‘full’ and ‘near’ testifies to the inadequacy of any classification” (1971: 8, 9).

²⁰ Some of the more recent works in the field continued this trend, keeping the definition a ‘hybrid regime’ vague and somewhat impractically broad. McMann, for example, categorised “nearly half of all countries worldwide” as hybrid regimes (2006: 174).

democracy" (1997).²¹ This approach reflected the lingering albeit waning optimism in the prospects of the third wave, as the terms' democratic root still assumed a linear, if stalled, transition from authoritarianism to democracy.

With the new millennium, this democratising bias gave way to a more pessimistic approach, which took a rather cynical view of the prospects for further democratisation in hybrid regimes, as well as the ability and commitment of those in charge of these regimes to deliver democratic reforms. The result was the rise of a new set of 'regimes with adjectives', only this time with an authoritarian root instead of a democratic one. Earlier works, the proponents of this new approach suggested, were mistaken to portray hybrid regimes as imperfect democracies, while in reality they were partly liberalised authoritarian regimes. Among the better known and more widely used labels conjured to explain these diminished types of autocracies are Levitsky and Way's "competitive authoritarianism" (2002), Ottaway's "semi-authoritarianism" (2003) and Schedler's "electoral authoritarianism" (2006).

Ultimately, instead of defining and clarifying the grey area between democracy and authoritarianism, the proliferation of so many regime types with adjectives has led to more empirical confusion and conceptual ambiguity, "for the resulting palette of qualified, yet improperly specified, regimes not only hinders differentiation among the cases but also clouds the basic distinction between democracy and autocracy." Furthermore, "this terminological Babel has served to conceal fundamental traits of all democracies, old and new, Western and non-Western", ignoring the idea that democratisation is a dynamic and continuous process everywhere and older western democracies are just as susceptible to "delegation, illiberalism, and other suboptimal outcomes" as the newer democracies (Armony and Schamis 2005: 114).

The shortcomings of the scholarship on hybrid regimes go beyond problems of taxonomy. As the concept itself is born out of the third wave democratisation and transition literature, it shares with this literature not only its core cultural, ideological and teleological assumptions, but also its rather particularistic geographic and historical scope. The normative framework and

²¹ Other terms include 'weak democracy', 'partial democracy', 'electoral democracy', 'façade democracy', and 'pseudo-democracy'. (Carothers 2002: 10; Collier and Levitsky 1997).

theories of the democratisation literature are predominantly built upon observations drawn from a specific set and type of empirical cases, and then applied, at times problematically, in a universal context.²² One observation-turned-normative assumption is the existence of a clear-cut rupture between an old and supposedly plainly authoritarian system, and a new and supposedly democratic arrangement. This is largely based on the experience of the collapse of military dictatorships in Southern Europe and Latin America in the 1970s and the 80s, and socialist one-party regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s.

The idea of rupture presents numerous challenges when taken as a framework for analysing transitions: it conceals potential continuities between and complexities within the old and the new regimes, running the risk of assigning potentially undue democratic credentials to the new regime just because it replaced the old one. Secondly, it lays the groundwork for conceptualising democratisation as a linear and unidirectional process from a starting point (authoritarianism) to a reachable end goal (democracy), thus reinforcing the teleological assumption. Finally, it provides no proper tool for detecting and analysing important episodes of socio-political change that do not include a clear-cut division between an old and a new regime.

Alongside this geographic (or contextual) limitation of the literature, a second (historical or temporal) limitation stems from the tendency to cluster episodes of political change into waves and counter-waves. By compartmentalising history in dichotomous grand narratives, the wave theory selectively magnifies one set of developments while trivialising others in any given time period. It plays down, for example, authoritarian tendencies during a wave of democratisation, and largely ignores attempts at democratic reform or consolidation during authoritarian counter-waves. At the same time, the scholarship's disproportionate preoccupation with the third wave democratisations means that those episodes of socio-political change predating the start of the third wave in the 1970s are rarely given enough attention or often inadequately investigated, even though these episodes may have had direct

²² This applies to some of the major works in the field including Linz (1975); O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986); Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1988); Huntington (1991); and Linz and Stepan (1996).

impact on more recent processes of change. Furthermore, since within the already limited time scale of the third wave much of the research is concentrated on post-Cold War transitions, political change is examined almost exclusively in a short-to-medium term view, i.e. within the framework of a few years to one or two decades.²³ The application of rigid transition models becomes all the more complicated as much can depend in the short term on external factors, such as an oil shock, environmental disasters or economic boom/bust cycles.

To return to my original point, as a product of the third wave and transition literature, much of the existing scholarship on hybrid regimes has inherited its limitations. Morlino's definition of hybrid regimes is a case in point, as it reflects both the linear perspective and the limited time scale of the larger literature, as well as the expectation of a rupture. A hybrid regime according to Morlino is:

a set of institutions that have been persistent, be they stable or unstable, for about a decade, have been preceded by authoritarianism, a traditional regime (possibly with colonial characteristics), or even a minimal democracy and are characterized by the break-up of limited pluralism and forms of independent, autonomous participation, but the absence of at least one of the four aspects of a minimal democracy. (2009: 282)

Turkey and Iran are two countries that expose these limitations and the shortcomings of the existing literature in explaining cases that do not fit into the empirical context of the third wave democratisations. Both regimes were hybrid before the end of the Cold War and do not owe their hybridity to any clear-cut rupture associated with the third wave or the triumph of western liberal democracy.²⁴ Likewise, the processes of socio-political change that the two countries have been going through since the late 1990s have been taking place without explicit regime change. Looking for a clear-cut rupture makes it harder to identify these subtle processes of change that occur within the boundaries and

²³ See, for example, the first of Tilly's (2000) six assumptions on democratisation.

²⁴ Although one could easily argue that Iran's 1979 revolution represents a clear-cut rupture and a departure from an authoritarian system into a hybrid one, transitologists have been reluctant to include the 'Islamic Revolution' among the third wave democratisations.

the rhetoric of the existing regimes, but nonetheless alter the very character of these regimes in a profound way.

As a result, scholars have often struggled with categorising outlier countries such as Turkey and Iran and treated them as exceptions or anomalies to the rule. In the *Third Wave*, Huntington placed Iran “elsewhere” (1991a: 141). Linz admitted in his *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* that it was “difficult to fit the Iranian regime into the existing typology” (2000: 36). Houchang Chehabi admitted “the comparativist has literally no previously developed tools for analysing [Iran’s] political system” (2001: 48). Similarly, Diamond categorised Turkey as an “ambiguous regime”, lying somewhere between competitive authoritarianism and electoral democracy. The majority of the countries that also found themselves in this awkward category had either recently experienced regime change as a result of popular uprisings (Indonesia), *coups d’état* (Fiji) or civil war (Sierra Leone), or were former Soviet states (Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine) that were still considered in a process of unfinished transition. Turkey, on the other hand, had been consistently ambiguous for a long time (Diamond 2006: 30 – 31).

For all its existing limitations, ambiguities and underlying assumptions, hybrid regime is a useful concept with considerable explanatory potential. It is also a necessary tool to overcome the dichotomisation of the world’s existing regimes between purely democratic and purely authoritarian. Such a division is hardly more realistic or objective than a Manichean division of the political space between good and evil, cowboys and Indians, etc. The grey area exists and it is a crowded space. Yet, for the hybrid regime concept to serve as a useful analytical tool, it needs to be redefined in a way that dispels existing conceptual ambiguities.

Neither authoritarian nor democratic: Hybrid regime redefined

The concept of hybrid regimes can become more useful if taken as a category separate from both democratic and authoritarian systems of governance (including their diminished versions).²⁵ In other words, a hybrid regime needs not be thought of as a diminished type of autocracy or a corrupted democracy. Dropping the democratic and authoritarian labels altogether would serve practical as well theoretical purposes. First, as Gilbert and Mohseni (2011: 273) point out, it would help move the discussion away from one of the main conceptual bottlenecks in the literature over defining the line that separates diminished types of authoritarianism from diminished democracies, which tends to be blurry and the labelling subjective.²⁶

Secondly, it could bridge the gap between the normative and empirical understandings of democracy. The idea of a diminished democracy implies that non-diminished, or perfect, democracies also exist. Indeed the current hybrid regime literature leads one to assume a sense of perfection in those regimes that are categorised as democratic, instead of hybrid. Looking from a Dahlian perspective, however, we could argue that a perfect democracy does not (and perhaps could not) exist, and in one way or another, all existing democratic systems are diminished types. Yet, of course, it would be highly impractical to simply label all democracies as hybrid regimes; this would also render both concepts meaningless. On the other hand, we would find ourselves thrown into the same conceptual bottleneck if we were to engage in an attempt to draw a line between democracies that are diminished enough to be labelled hybrid and the not-so-diminished democracies. Dealing with hybrid regimes not as diminished democracies (or autocracies) but as a separate regime type altogether would address the criticism voiced by Armony and Schamis that the transitional Babel conceals “fundamental traits of all democracies, old and new, Western and non-Western”, and also treat democratisation as a dynamic and continuous process.

²⁵ Diamond (2002) and Ottaway (2003) have suggested that hybrid regime concept might be better understood as neither democratic nor authoritarian. Others, including Bogaards (2009) and Gilbert and Mohseni (2011) have built on this suggestion.

²⁶ In his essay “Thinking About Hybrid Regimes”, Diamond labelled 17 regimes as ‘ambiguous’ because, “they fall on the blurry boundary between electoral democracy and competitive authoritarianism, with independent observers disagreeing on how to classify them.” (2002: 26)

Finally, and related to this last point, taking the hybrid regime concept outside the bipolar and linear framework that has dominated the literature could dispel some of its core assumptions and limitations, particularly with regards to historical progress. A hybrid regime, in other words, is not necessarily a regime that became stalled in transition; a half-finished or half-hearted attempt at democratisation. Regimes, as the cases of Turkey and Iran will demonstrate, can be established and consolidated as hybrid, with institutions reflecting the coexistence of conflicting interest groups and ideologies, as well as competing sources of sovereignty and legitimacy. Hybridity need not imply a fleeting moment; it could be an intrinsic and fairly stable feature. A similar approach has been put forth by Gilbert and Mohseni (2011: 272), who rather than placing regimes “on a single continuum from authoritarianism to democracy” have instead opted for a “configurative approach” that highlights the multiple dimensions of regimes and places greater attention on “a variety of institutional features that distinguish regimes from one another rather than the more common underlying dimension of competitiveness.”

The term ‘hybrid regime’ then, stands for those political systems which can be labelled neither as democratic nor authoritarian, despite embodying both democratic and authoritarian institutional elements. Here, the word ‘institutional’ plays a central role in differentiating the hybrid regime from the logic of a diminished democracy. Put more clearly, in light of the second point above, what makes a regime hybrid in the first instance is not the ‘quality’ of its democracy, but rather the existence of formal non-democratic institutions alongside, and often in conflict with democratic ones. Likewise, this conceptualisation of the hybrid regime differs from that of a competitive authoritarian regime, as the former presumes not an inherently authoritarian nature, but a Janus-faced (perhaps schizophrenic) nature that is both inherently authoritarian and inherently democratic. The idea of competitive authoritarianism, like diminished democracies, has been understood as a matter of quality or scale of democracy, rather than institutional architecture. According to Levitsky and Way (2002: 52), in competitive authoritarian regimes, “formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority. *Incumbents violate those rules so often and to*

such an extent, however, that the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy.”²⁷

The emphasis on the differentiation between institutions and practice is in essence an issue of legitimacy. Levitsky and Way’s definition implies that by systematically violating the rules of democratic institutions, which are “widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority”, power holders knowingly engage in acts that are broadly perceived as unlawful or illegitimate, even if the incumbents, the opposition and a majority of the public have become habituated to these violations and acquiesced to the status quo. Hence, both diminished democracies and competitive authoritarian systems suffer, at least in theory, from a legitimacy gap resulting from the difference between purported norms and actual practice. Power holders in these countries, similar to the guardians in hybrid regimes, often attempt to bridge this democratic deficit using ‘defensive semi-ideologies’ with references to nationalism, geopolitical threats, and historical and cultural exceptionalism. With their powerful elected leaders frequently undermining, circumventing, violating and modifying the rules of their purportedly democratic institutions, Russia under Putin and Venezuela under Chavez can be thought as examples of diminished electoral systems with a legitimacy gap.

In hybrid regimes, on the other hand, such a gap might also exist but could be narrower, as the presence of formally recognised non-democratic institutions tends to provide a degree of legitimacy to non-democratic actors and their actions, certainly in the eyes of those who control these institutions, but also quite possibly among opposition groups and parts of the populace. These non-democratic institutions, in turn, also justify their existence by and derive their legitimacy from history (traditional or revolutionary) and/or ideology (secular or religious). Thailand with its monarchy and Ghana with its system of chieftaincy are two examples of hybrid regimes where traditionally legitimised institutions share sovereignty and negotiate authority with formal democratic

²⁷ Italics are mine. While Levitsky and Way consider competitive authoritarianism as a type of hybrid regime, they argue that it “must be distinguished from other types of hybrid regimes”, including “tutelary” or “guided” democracies (2002: 54). I argue that hybrid regimes should be distinguished altogether from diminished types of regimes, either authoritarian or democratic, and that tutelary and guided democracies are examples of hybrid regimes.

institutions (Ray 1996). The institutions of guardianship in Khomeinist Iran and Kemalist Turkey, on the other hand, combine traditional, revolutionary and ideological legitimization. Indeed, one could argue that far from being fragile 'halfway houses', the institutional legitimacy of non-democratic elements, combined with their democratic counterparts, provides a level of flexibility and endurance to hybrid regimes that many authoritarian or diminished democratic regimes might lack.

In their configurative approach, Gilbert and Mohseni outline three dimensions to assess whether a regime falls into the democratic, hybrid or authoritarian category: competitiveness, civil liberties and tutelary interference (2011: 284). What separates hybrid regimes from authoritarian regimes is that the former hold *competitive* multiparty elections, albeit under conditions circumscribed by non-democratic factors.²⁸ "Although the electoral process may be characterized by large-scale abuses of state power, biased media coverage, (often violent) harassment of opposition candidates and activists, and an overall lack of transparency," write Levitsky and Way, "elections are regularly held, competitive (in that major opposition parties and candidates usually participate), and generally free of massive fraud." (2002: 55). This fits in with my conceptualisation of hybrid regimes, as long as the non-democratic context in question is a result and reflection of specific institutional arrangements, and not just bad practice.

The second dimension, civil liberties, determines the nature of competition and the levelness of the electoral playing field, which can vary among different regime types, within a particular regime type, and also fluctuate in a given regime over time (Gilbert and Mohseni 2011: 285).²⁹ While both competitiveness and civil liberties serve as important indicators in categorising regimes and gauging the 'quality' of a democracy, it is the third dimension – tutelary interference, or guardianship – that is at the heart of my conceptualisation of hybrid regimes, as it deals directly with the existence of

²⁸ "Competitive elections are those in which more than one center of power with different socio-economic interests can participate and 'present a serious electoral challenge to incumbents'". (Levitsky and Way 2002: 55)

²⁹ Dahl's basic conception of civil liberties includes freedom to form and join organisations, freedom of expression, the right to vote, eligibility for public office, the right of political leaders to compete for support, alternative sources of information, and free and fair elections. (1971: 3)

formal non-democratic institutions within an otherwise democratic arrangement, or vice versa. The next section will elaborate on this dimension.

Guardianship and the hybrid regime

Who are the guardians and what do they guard?

Guardianship is a political arrangement where the state is governed by “meritorious rulers who consist of a minority of adults, quite likely a very small minority, *and who are not subject to the democratic process.*” (Dahl 1989: 57). It is, in other words, rule by self-described philosopher kings, or a benevolent dictatorship. Deeply distrustful of the masses, guardianship challenges the basic democratic idea that human beings are capable of understanding and defending their own and society’s interests. From Plato’s treatment of government as a “royal art or science” in *The Republic* to the epistemic elitism and paternalism prevalent in Confucianism, from Gustave Le Bon’s virtuous, rational and skilful elite to Lenin’s ‘vanguard party’ shepherding the proletariat, the idea that only a small minority can possess the necessary knowledge, virtue and skills to govern on behalf of the people has been a powerful and attractive vision throughout history. It has been prominent in the East and the West, in classical, medieval and modern societies and endorsed by monarchists and republicans, conservatives and revolutionaries alike.

In whatever socio-political context and geography it appears and whoever promotes it, the idea of guardianship entails an inherently paternalistic view and hierarchical organisation of society, based on the assumption that ‘objective truth’ – or at least a superior wisdom – exists, but can only be attained by a select few. In the spirit of Rousseau’s ‘Legislator’, the guardians believe they are in possession of “a superior intelligence beholding all the passions of men without experiencing any of them.” “Far above the range of the common herd,” the guardian is “the engineer who invents the machine” (Rousseau 2008: 44 – 47). Like Weber’s charismatic leader, to which I will return in Chapter 3 when discussing Atatürk and Khomeini, the legislator refers to an individual – rather

than a social class or an institution – who, as a gifted politician, orator and leader, plays the role of the founding father. It is often the case in revolutionary polities that institutions of guardianship derive their legitimacy, charisma and ideological vision from such charismatic leaders.

In Plato's ideal republic, the guardians are the *aristos*, selected from among the populace for their skills, intelligence and moral virtue, and rigorously trained for the task of governing. In this meritocratic utopia, the *demos* give the guardians their implicit or explicit consent to govern. But since the people are not fully aware of their interests, they may oppose to the stewardship of a professional ruling class. Plato suggests that the guardians produce a "noble lie" – also interpreted as "magnificent myth" or a founding religion – to win over the society's consent (1987: 122); an advice that autocratic regimes everywhere have taken to heart. It has often been the case in tutelary systems that at least a minority within the population does share the guardians' worldview and supports their socio-political role, out of ideological conviction, a shared distrust of the masses and/or because the guardians represent and serve their interests. Needless to say, there is a direct correlation between popular support for the guardians and the stability and perceived legitimacy of these regimes.

Has anything resembling Plato's utopia existed in history? Perhaps one could point to the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, who was born into an aristocratic family and strove as a ruler to remain true to the Stoic philosophy he was educated in, as the personification of Plato's philosopher king. Another historical contender would be Cyrus the Great. China with its enlightened emperors and meritocratic bureaucracy and, as the next chapter will elaborate, the Ottoman Empire at its height during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could be said to have devised sophisticated administrative formulas that generated considerable cohesion, stability and prosperity in complex societies. Venice for nearly eight centuries and Florence under the Medici were highly successful examples of republican city-states governed by aristocracies.

While there may have been no perfect guardianship – and for that matter, no perfect democracy – we can argue that monarchism, which has provided the majority of political regimes until modern times and represents the traditional type of guardianship, could not have survived as long as it did if it rested solely

on divine legitimation and brute force, without meeting at least some of the practical interests of the societies it ruled. This is not to deny the existence of a vast number of dictatorial governments, both ancient and modern, that have used the idea of guardianship “in its most vulgar form” to justify their “corrupt, brutal and inept” regimes. Even so, as Dahl notes, the argument for guardianship does not collapse simply because it has been badly abused:

When we apply the same harsh test to democratic ideas, they too are often found wanting in practice. For both democracy and hierarchy, their worst failures are relevant to a judgment about these two alternatives. But so too are the more successful instances of each, as well as the relative feasibility and desirability of the ideal standards of democracy and guardianship. (1989: 52)

Dahl contests guardianship on the basis of its two theoretical premises: that there is ‘a single truth’ that is objective and attainable and that this can only be attained by a very small minority of adults in society. It is questionable, of course, whether guardians throughout history have viewed ‘truth’ as a single, absolute and exclusive phenomenon. The idea of ‘superior wisdom’ or intelligence, as stated by Rousseau, may be strictly hierarchical and elitist, but perhaps not equally absolute in its view of the truth and exclusive in its possession. Either way, as Dahl too concedes, guardianship has always been “the perennial alternative” and “the most formidable rival” to democracy and remains so today (1989: 64).

Guardianship and democracy in hybrid regimes

Guardianship, Dahl notes, is not a mere modification of a democratic regime; “it’s an alternative to democracy, a fundamentally different *kind* of regime” (1989: 57). What, then, are we to make of those political arrangements, which accommodate both of these apparently inimical visions of government? Let me emphasise at this point that my interest is not in authoritarian systems with democratic façades, where elections are thoroughly rigged and inconsequential and rulers unconvincingly paint themselves as the guardians of the people. Nor

am I primarily interested in “quasi-guardianship” institutions that may exist within modern democratic systems, such as the US Supreme Court, even though the discussion on guardianship and hybridity is increasingly relevant to modern representative democracies, where expertise, specialisation and delegation of authority are the norm (Dahl 1989: 155, 187 – 191). Instead, I focus on arrangements where full-fledged guardianship structures, established on the basis of an elitist view of society and often (though not necessarily) a utopian founding ideology, share political authority with reasonably independent and influential popular electoral institutions.

In the context of modern hybrid regimes, guardianship institutions refer to those tutelary bodies that coexist with, apply pressure on, and limit the legal and political jurisdiction of elected offices. Guardians are powerful unelected actors, such as the military, clerical bodies, bureaucratic, judicial and intelligence enclaves, as well as hereditary institutions such as monarchy or nobility, which “exercise broad oversight of the government and its policy decisions while claiming to represent vaguely formulated fundamental and enduring interests of the nation-state.” (Valenzuela 1992: 67). We can think of a hybrid system as a mutual compromise between guardianship and democracy, where political sovereignty is shared between the institutions representing the two visions. This rarely works out as an equitable division, as the guardians typically manipulate the playing field to their own advantage. Despite being constrained by the guardians, however, elected officials in hybrid regimes are not mere puppets: their impact on the socio-political life of the country can be decisive.

In hybrid regimes, guardians may exert their influence through formal and informal channels. In other words, guardians tend to hold “constitutionally defined final decision-making power in crucial policy areas that normally would fall under democratic control.” (Wigell 2008: 238). This is also called “reserved domains” (Valenzuela 1992: 36 – 50). In addition, they may act through “informal channels or through the inauguration of ‘control-commissions’ that exercise broad, but vaguely defined, control over the conduct of elected governments.” (Wigell 2008: 239). Such informal channels could include the use of political parties, the media, civil society organisations or a range of clandestine agencies as proxies to manipulate public opinion and political decisions. In many

hybrid cases formal and informal arrangements go hand in hand: guardians seek to formalise their positions of influence through legal/constitutional means. Yet even when this is achieved, they may maintain informal methods of interference in socio-political life.

Based on this understanding, we can argue that a large number of pre-1914 European political systems were hybrid regimes, with elected parliaments growing in influence alongside traditional institutions of guardianship, namely the monarchy and aristocracy. The German Empire in the late nineteenth century and Imperial Russia on the eve of World War I are two cases in point. Likewise, despite losing much of its political clout over the past century, the British House of Lords still theoretically embodies many of the essential characteristics of guardianship. As an institution that derives its legitimacy from history and tradition, whose appointed members (some of them still hereditary peers) come from the nobility and the clergy, which serves as a check on the elected government (could veto legislation outright until 1911 and can still delay and defeat bills), and which until very recently enjoyed significant legislative powers (1997) and functioned as a type of supreme court (2009), the House of Lords historically had much in common with the Guardian Council in the Islamic Republic of Iran. As I noted above, the US Supreme Court can be thought of as a 'quasi-guardianship' institute within a democratic polity. The brief periods of constitutionalism in the Ottoman and Qajar empires in the early twentieth century constitute the earliest versions of hybridity in Turkey and Iran.

Wigell cautions us not to confuse tutelary powers with "specialised bodies like constitutional courts, accounting offices, ombudsmen or human rights commissions that perform as institutions of horizontal accountability, and therefore may be indispensable to liberal democracy" (2008: 239). This statement is hard to refute given that modern democracies are not solely made up of directly elected legislative councils. Yet the line separating non-democratic tutelage from the vital organs of democratic checks and balances may not always be so clear – not least because the guardians of hybrid regimes often perceive and portray themselves as indispensable to, among other things, the preservation of democracy. The ongoing debate about reforming the House of Lords in the United Kingdom suggests that the existence of such an institution

remains controversial in an established democracy.³⁰ A similar debate has been raging in Israel regarding the role of the Israeli Supreme Court.³¹

It might be easier to pass verdict from the outset when the tutelary institutions in question are armed organisations, such as the military in Thailand or Turkey. Protecting democracy by the barrel of a gun appears to be an oxymoron, especially if this 'protection' becomes a permanent role. The long history of praetorian militaries tell us that the notion of a patriarchal, hierarchical and authoritarian institution that monopolises violence and has exclusive membership acting as the guardian of a democratic regime, ideology or nation and thereby regularly intervening in the socio-political life of a country is inimical to the idea of public deliberation and consensus.³² The duty of the armed forces in a substantive democracy should be limited to defending the country against external armed aggression under the authority of democratically elected civilian lawmakers. This is not to suggest that because of their non-democratic internal make-up, militaries are necessarily anti-democratic institutions. Nor does it imply that military interventions can never be justified. There may be plausible grounds for a military intervention, for instance to prevent a civil war or a dictatorial seizure of power.³³ Yet it tends to be more often the case that politicised militaries exploit (or even provoke) the spectre of civil war and/or manipulate public opinion against elected governments to justify an intervention.

This point leads me to the necessity of avoiding simplistic generalisations: while I explain hybrid regimes as made up of two theoretically/institutionally

³⁰ When British MPs voted for a fully elected House of Lords in 2007 – a proposal subsequently rejected by the Lords – *The Telegraph* asked its readers: "Was the old House of Lords an undemocratic anachronism? Or was it rather a guarantor of our constitutional liberties and a link with our past?" In 2011, when the Liberal Democrats failed to get their Conservative coalition partners to agree to a full elected Lords, George Eaton of the *New Statesman* bemoaned, "we will remain the only semi-theocracy in the western world." See "Would a wholly elected House of Lords strengthen British democracy?" *The Telegraph*, 7 March 2007, and "Clegg backs down on House of Lords Reform" *New Statesman*, 4 April 2011.

³¹ See "MKs, ministers are delegitimizing Supreme Court", *Jerusalem Post*, 12 January 2011; "Supreme Court is danger to Israeli democracy", *Jerusalem Post*, 12 April 2011; "Who is undermining Israeli democracy?" *Jerusalem Post*, 12 September 2011.

³² For a definition of praetorianism, see Moran (1999).

³³ Constitutional law scholar Ozan Varol (2012) argues "Some coups are distinctly more democratic than others because they respond to a popular uprising against an authoritarian or totalitarian regime and topple that regime for the limited purpose of holding the free and fair elections of civilian leaders."

distinctive pillars for purposes of analytical clarity, neither the institutions in question nor their specific components should be understood as monolithic entities. Depicting political change in hybrid regimes as a romantic struggle between clearly delineated binary forces – autocratic guardians and democratic politicians – might be tempting, but would be misleading. Just as elected officials can display authoritarian tendencies, there may be democratic-minded guardians in positions of influence. Guardians may, and often do, maintain unofficial representatives among elected politicians, while democratic norms and values could permeate institutions of guardianship. Different interpretations of the state ideology and the evolving structural dynamics may create and reshape factions within both pillars, opening up avenues for factional cooperation and competition across pillars, with informal socio-political alliances being formed and dissolved on a continual basis. Indeed, it is this complex and fluid dynamic that best reflects the causes, the essence and the course of political change in hybrid regimes, and that is partly what this research aims to capture.

In this vein, let me emphasise that where I talk about democracy in an institutional context – i.e. the democratic pillar of a hybrid regime – I do so in a minimalist sense, referring to the institutions of elected officials. But when I refer to democracy as an ideal, I do so in its broader, ‘substantive’ sense, implying the “opportunity for citizens to participate in political discussions and so to be in a position to influence public choice”; in short, public deliberation (Sen 2003: 29). Likewise, instead of a goal that is reached once and for all upon inaugurating a list of institutions, democratisation is understood as a complex and open-ended process that has to be questioned and reproduced publicly and institutionally on a continuous basis (Whitehead 2002: 27).

Political change in hybrid regimes: Five hypotheses

In an attempt to address the preliminary research questions that I presented in the Introduction to the thesis, I will outline five hypotheses concerning the dynamics of change in hybrid regimes, which I will apply to the Turkish and Iranian cases in the upcoming chapters. **The first hypothesis** deals with the stability of hybrid regimes, particularly in times of socio-political crisis. I have already argued that hybrid regimes are not the fragile halfway houses once assumed by most transitologists. On the one hand, the existence of democratic institutions grants popular legitimacy to hybrid regimes, which most modern authoritarian systems appear to lack. On the other hand, non-democratic norms and practices are legitimised by traditionally, ideologically or religiously sanctioned – and often, constitutionally endorsed – institutions of guardianship. Hence, hybrid regimes might be less exposed to legitimacy gaps compared to diminished democracies or competitive authoritarian systems and indeed prove more stable and enduring than both.

The very hybrid character of these regimes suggests that the guardians have at their disposal both authoritarian and democratic tools that they can effectively utilise to absorb challenges to their authority and survive crises. Public negotiation need not open floodgates, as is usually the risk in authoritarian regimes. The guardians can take advantage of the extant political platform to settle differences with democratic challengers to their authority without recourse to violence. As long as this political platform remains sufficiently open to challengers, the guardians can project themselves as upholding the regime's democratic pillar, while cutting deals with 'moderates' behind the curtain to marginalise 'radical' elements within the opposition. Once the opposition is labelled as 'radical' it may be easier to legitimise the use of non-democratic measures to suppress it.³⁴

There is admittedly a flip side to all this. The existence of a democratic pillar means that guardians have to be more restrained than plain dictatorships in the use of non-democratic measures. They cannot shut down the democratic process completely, at least not without having a vestige of public support for

³⁴ Of course, this strategy applies to democratic and authoritarian regimes as well.

such drastic action (such as a military coup). Even then, they may face popular resistance, which tends to grow the longer the democratic process remains closed. Shutting down democratic institutions and suppressing prolonged dissent would effectively dismantle the hybrid architecture of the regime, rendering it plainly authoritarian. This is a scenario that guardians generally wish to avoid: the history of military coups in Turkey and Thailand demonstrates that direct intervention by guardians tends to be short term, with a return to hybridity following a process of socio-political 'fine-tuning'. Yet as the case of Iran post-2009 election suggests, confrontation can also reach a level of intensity or pass a tipping point beyond which the guardians cannot (or do not) avoid a decline into authoritarianism.

This brings us to **the second hypothesis**: a quick historical survey of hybrid regimes would lead us to assume with some conviction that the nature of the relationship between guardianship and democracy is indeed one of rivalry and conflict. Furthermore, the dividing line between the authoritarian and democratic pillars tends to be dynamic as a result of being continually negotiated. As such, even though hybrid regimes might be better equipped to survive crises, their divided and internally conflicted nature might mean that they are more prone to experiencing frequent existential crises than democracies and autocracies. Between 1960 and 1997, Turkey experienced four military coups; one in each decade. In Thailand, the number of attempted coups during the past 80 years stands at a staggering 18. Although direct military coups are rare in Iran, the entire political history of the Islamic Republic could be interpreted as a continuous crisis between the Islamic and republican pillars of the regime.

The third hypothesis follows from this paradox. If hybrid systems can endure but cannot prevent periodic political crises, this would indicate frequent swings between authoritarianism and democracy in the political playing field. It should be emphasised, however, that these swings do not indicate the democratisation (or otherwise) of hybrid regimes *unless* they result in decisive institutional changes that render either the authoritarian or the democratic pillar obsolete. A particular challenge for this thesis is to understand whether the institutional shifts that occurred in Turkey and Iran during the first decade of the

twenty-first century mean that these regimes subsequently lost their hybrid character, or were these shifts merely swings within the hybrid structure.

Rapid movements between authoritarianism and democracy within the hybrid system can be deceptive and difficult to predict. In 1997, having overwhelmingly elected reformist President Mohammad Khatami, Iran seemed to hold more democratic promise than Turkey, where the military-bureaucratic guardians had just ousted another democratically-elected government. Yet in late 2009, when I began researching for this thesis, it was Turkey that appeared to be on course towards democratic consolidation, while the regime in Iran was descending into authoritarianism. The direction of change seemed to have changed yet again by the summer of 2013, with the election of President Hassan Rouhani in Iran and the outbreak of mass protests in Turkey against the elected government's perceived slide towards authoritarianism.

The nature of these swings and changes tend to perplex transitologists. Turkey, for example, has been categorised (justifiably) as an authoritarian regime during periods of direct military rule, but (misleadingly) as a democracy when the military was back in the barracks.³⁵ The latter categorisation overlooked the fact that the institutional structure that allowed the military guardians to influence Turkish politics behind the scenes was actually strengthened during periods of direct military rule and remained firmly in place when the guardians took a backseat to elected officials. These changes can be better explained as internal swings within the hybrid system, rather than systemic transitions between authoritarianism and democracy.

This brings me to my **fourth hypothesis**, concerning the difficult task of determining what constitutes a 'decisive' institutional change that renders one of the two pillars of the hybrid regime – hence the hybrid regime itself – obsolete. The clearest indication of such change would be the disappearance of an institution of guardianship or democracy, such as the outright and permanent banning of elections by a dictatorship, or the abrogation of monarchy. But decisive change does not always have to be – in fact, often is not – so explicit and radical. A more subtle yet still decisive indication would be the loss of practical authority of the institution in question, despite its continued existence in name

³⁵ See for example Brownlee (2009).

and ceremonial nature. In the case of guardianship institutions, the measurement would be the extent to which a non-elected body can, through formal and informal channels, influence and manipulate the electoral process, curtail civil liberties and limit the political jurisdiction of popularly elected officials (i.e. the first two dimensions of hybridity).

This is what sets Iran's Guardian Council apart from the British House of Lords, or the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic from the Queen of England. In other words, had the House of Lords possessed the authority to vet and disqualify candidates standing for popular election or to veto all legislation approved by the Commons, or if British monarchs still enjoyed extensive control over the kingdom's foreign and security policies then they would be labelled as institutions of guardianship and the United Kingdom a hybrid regime. Admittedly, the existence of the debate over the nature and the existing powers of the House of Lords suggests that we cannot avoid the 'grey area'. At least in our case, it appears smaller and more manageable than in the existing hybrid regime literature.

It might be more difficult to gauge just when electoral institutions become 'obsolete'. This is because parliaments can continue to function and create policy and elections to deliver results, but these policies and results may have very little or no practical bearing on government, or they can be simply dictated by guardians behind closed doors. In such cases, the democratic pillar becomes merely a façade. Yet while it is easier to spot autocratic regimes where the dictator is routinely 're-elected' with upwards of 90% support, it becomes less straightforward to tell whether the democratic pillar still stands when there is a semblance of competition and autonomy, but also extensive evidence of manipulation by the guardians, so that the outcome routinely favours the guardians. One way of overcoming this ambiguity would be by looking directly at the source of the democratic pillar – the *demos* – and observe changes in popular perceptions and attitudes regarding the integrity and legitimacy of the democratic pillar. As is also the case in democratic systems, widespread discontent, expressed either in the form of popular unrest or extreme apathy, signals problems of integrity of the democratic pillar in hybrid regimes.

The final hypothesis is concerned with transitions from, as well as back to, hybrid regimes. It might be rather moot, but still necessary, to point out that once a regime ceases to be hybrid because it has either lost its democratic or guardianship pillar, it does not automatically become democratic or authoritarian. Indeed, we should hold the successor systems against the same robust test of competitiveness, civil liberties and tutelary interference, before labelling them democratic or authoritarian. This goes back to my earlier point about these pillars not being monolithic and the outcome of transitions not preordained. A victory of the democratic pillar over the guardians does not guarantee – although could well lead to – improvements in civil liberties and competitiveness. A new tutelary system can replace the old one. It is also possible that a system returns to hybridity by reviving its lost pillar. This can either be when guardians find direct rule too risky and opt for a degree of democratic legitimacy or when an electoral system fails to be consolidated and the guardians re-enter the political arena upon the perceived failure of democracy.

Conclusion

This first chapter has provided an overview of the democratisation and transition literatures and the dominant assumptions associated with the field since the early 1990s. The hybrid regime concept is a product of this literature and emerged as a response to the slowing pace of third wave democratisations in the late 1990s. While it is a potentially useful and necessary concept, it has been mired in taxonomical complexities and also shares with the wider democratisation literature its various limitations and core assumptions. I have redefined hybrid regimes as political systems that can be categorised as neither diminished type of democracies nor diminished types of authoritarianism, but a separate arrangement that embodies elements of both. Crucially, what makes a regime hybrid is not only the quality (or lack thereof) of its democracy, but also the coexistence of formal or informal democratic and authoritarian institutional

structures. Guardianship is a central tenet of hybrid systems, manipulating the electoral playing field, limiting the jurisdiction of elected politicians and regularly intervening in the social and political life of the people.

While the existence of historically or ideologically sanctioned institutions of guardianship alongside democratic institutions provides the hybrid regime with a diverse set of tools to deal with and survive political crises, conversely, their very institutional double headedness means such crises could occur relatively frequently. Crises can generate swings between democracy and authoritarianism, but the regime only ceases to be hybrid when its dual institutional structure is decisively altered.

CHAPTER 2

OF POWER AND RESISTANCE: STRUCTURAL ROOTS OF AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMACY IN IRAN AND TURKEY

Introduction

The question of political change, as I suggested in Introduction, is also a question of the contestation, negotiation and legitimation of power. Moving from this premise, this chapter attempts to build a comparative historical framework upon which an analysis of the political change in the modern Turkish and Iranian republics can be carried out. It is my contention that historically rooted perceptions of authority and legitimacy, as subjective, retrospective and continually re-interpreted in response to changing dynamics as they are, play a key role in ascribing normative characteristics to political institutions. Key institutional characteristic, in turn, help explain both wider socio-political change patterns and individual actor choices.

What does the state (*dowlat* in Farsi and *devlet* in Turkish) represent in Iran and Turkey in relation to society? How come does it appear to exist autonomously from society in both polities and needs to ‘survive’ challenges posed against it not only from other states, but also from the society itself? Consequently, what makes political authority legitimate (or illegitimate) in the eyes of both those who govern and those who are governed? In an attempt to answer these questions, this chapter will examine the historically rooted perceptions of legitimate authority in Iran and Turkey in light of key cultural/religious and geopolitical references.

In particular I wish to emphasise what Homa Katouzian refers to as the “dialectic of state and society” in Iran, in contrast to the hierarchical unison of the state with society in Turkey. The supra-dynastic character of Iran as a civilisational concept, reflected in pre-Islamic and Shi’a notions of justice-based

divine sanction, has worked to legitimise two conflicting forces here: authoritarian rule and popular revolt. The popular association of political authority with externally imposed tyranny justifies dissent against political authority in Iran. In contrast, the state has been a major player and remained a central aspect of identity-building in Turkey. Here, the institutional experiences of the rise and fall of the Ottoman state, along with the impact of Turco-Persian, Byzantine and Sunni Islamic traditions loom large.

On 'Iran' and 'Turkey': What is in a name?

What is 'Iran' and what is 'Turkey'? Two countries and two modern-nation states, of course; yet the terms have markedly different historical and cultural connotations which determine the way we conceptualise our two case studies. Beyond the modern construct of a nation-state, Iran refers to both a geographic and, more importantly, 'civilisational' concept that has been in more or less continuous use on location for over three millennia. While its literal meaning is 'the land of the Aryans', it does not imply an overtly ethnic character. The 'Aryanness' of the people of Iran has been emphasised at various points in modern history, in the West as well as in Iran, particularly during the rise and height of ethno-nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and for much of the reign of the Pahlavi shahs.³⁶ But we cannot define Iran as the exclusive domain of any single tribe or ethnic group. The Iranian plateau constitutes a narrow corridor along the ancient Silk Road between the Alborz and Zagros mountains that has seen a continuous flow of goods, ideas, migrants as well as invaders. In contrast to the persistent attachment of an ethnic undertone to the concept of 'Persia' in western political thinking, being Iranian has first and foremost a linguistic connotation, referring to the lands dominated

³⁶ In the words of Mohammad Reza Shah: "Certainly no one can doubt that our culture is more akin to that of the West than is either the Chinese or that of our neighbours the Arabs. Iran was an early home of Aryans from whom most Americans and Europeans are descended, and we are racially quite separate from the Semitic stock of the Arabs." (Pahlavi 1960: 18; quoted in Shakibi 2010: 53).

by speakers of the Persian language, which covers a wider area than the Iranian plateau.

Nor does Iran singularly refer to a political regime or dynasty. Iranian history, both ancient and modern, is awash with dynasties that have come and gone, of local as well as foreign origins, some fleeting others more enduring in impact and influence. Yet Iran is not exclusively defined by the Achaemenid, Sassanid or Safavid empires – or the Islamic Republic for that matter. Conversely, all of these regimes and dynasties are considered Iranian and part of the history of Iran. In this sense, Iran is more analogous to China than its immediate neighbours as a ‘civilisational’ notion, in that it has a supra-dynastic quality. Both China and Iran have been subjected to foreign conquest and rule at various points in history. Yet on numerous occasions, a degree of assimilation of the conquering peoples, through partial or full adoption of the language and traditions, has allowed for distinctly Iranian and Chinese cultures to survive and even flourish under ‘foreign’ domination. Today it is commonplace to count the Turkic Seljuk, the Mongol Ilkhanid and the Azeri Safavid states as Iranian dynasties, just as it is not unusual to list the Manchu Qing or the Mongol Yuan dynasties as among Chinese (or at least Sinicised) dynasties.³⁷

The idea of cultural continuity nonetheless begs further clarification. It certainly should not be taken to mean that there is a single Iranian identity that has remained unchanged since the dawn of civilisation. The imagination of a monolithic Iranian national identity has served as a political tool in modern Iranian history, either in the hands of westernised intellectuals as part of a nation-building process, or dynasties aiming at self-legitimation.³⁸ The vast number of dynasties, regimes and ideologies that have dominated Iran alone is a testament to the presence of a plurality of diverse, often clashing, identities. The

³⁷ This was of course not a one-way exchange. As Mitchell wrote, “[t]he conquests of Chingiz Khan and Timur, along with the resulting suzerain states in eastern Anatolia, Iran, and Central Asia, had fused Chingizid and Chaghata’i elements into the Persian bureaucratic culture as well as its use of terminology, seals, and symbols. [...] Anatolian and western Iranian bureaucratic practices experienced further changes under the Turkmen dynasties of the Karakoyunlu and Akkoyunlu.” (Mitchell 2009: 199)

³⁸ See Vaziri (1993) and Tavakoli-Targhi (2001). For examples of western attempts to legitimise the Pahlavi dynasty by emphasising its place in the continuous tradition of Iranian kingship, see Bayne (1969) and Lenczowski (1978).

idea of Iran promoted by the Pahlavis is clearly at odds with the one narrated by Ayatollah Khomeini.

We should however distinguish between nationalist propaganda and social history. Regardless of its fluid or even mythical nature, the enduring reference to a concept of Iran, which at least one group of people consciously identified with at a given point for nearly three millennia, allows us to speak of a sense of historical continuity, evidenced by the existence of a set of institutions and traditions whose evolution can be traced within the confines of an Iranian cultural sphere. In this respect, Iran stands apart from other nation-states in its neighbourhood, such as Iraq or Pakistan, which are more easily categorised as purely modern constructs (Gellner 1964: 169). As Anthony D. Smith argues in his critique of the modernist view of nationalism, Iran embodies certain “participants’ primordialism”: the persistent notion of a homeland, names, symbols and memories (however flawed or selective) at a collective level despite conquest and colonisation (1995: 34 – 35).

Turkey shares few of these characteristics. In contrast to Iran, Turkey as a political or geographic term does not evoke a similar sense of historical continuity. For centuries, the term was used almost exclusively in Europe in reference to the Ottoman Empire. Prior to the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, it meant little or nothing to the inhabitants of the geographic area that the republic comprises today. In fact, as historian Metin Kunt pointed out, a corresponding term did not exist in most languages spoken within the Ottoman borders, including in Turkish. This was a rather inaccurate way of conceptualising the Ottoman Empire, as there was little that was exclusively Turkish about the vast realm. The Ottoman Empire was a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual empire that in no clear way constituted a land of Turks or even a ‘Turkish empire’ (Kunt and Woodhead 1995: 4).

In Europe, the term ‘Turk’ was widely used to refer to all Muslims within Ottoman lands, often with derogatory and racist implications (Akarlı 2006). But the term had a similarly negative connotation among the Ottoman elite as well, where it was typically used to describe someone as uncouth, backward or uncivilised, typified by the Turkmen nomads of the Anatolian highlands. As the Ottoman polity transformed from a local principality into a vast empire, the

Ottoman elite became more hesitant to emphasise the dynasty's Turkic lineage and instead identified themselves on the basis of their religious affiliation, or later, as Ottomans (Kushner 1997). It was not until the traditional *millet* system faced collapse in the late nineteenth century, and following failed attempts to create an Ottoman identity encompassing all faiths and religions represented within the realm, that Muslim nationalists rehabilitated 'the Turk' and used it to refer to the diverse Muslim societies of the fast shrinking empire (with the exception of Arabs). This configuration, which Turkish nationalists ironically adopted from European Orientalists, ultimately formed the social basis of the republic.

For centuries, the Ottoman Empire was known to its subjects as '*Devlet-i Âliye-yi Osmâniyye*', or the domains of the House of Osman. (In contrast the Qajar state was called *Dowlat-e 'Ali-ye Iran*, emphasising its Iranian identity). In the sense that the state was at the centre of the definition of both the political and the geographic entity, the Ottoman Empire was probably most similar to the polity it had supplanted: Byzantium. But whereas in the case of Byzantium dynasties replaced one another while the state lived on, "in the Ottoman case the dynasty *was* the state throughout its 622-year career." (Kunt and Woodhead 1995: 4). The dynasty meant the state, while the state – as it evolved into the complex administrative machinery overseeing the affairs of a domain spanning three continents – became analogous with the empire.

Systematic nationalist propaganda during the republican era sought to construct a purely Turkish historical identity by claiming an unbroken link between early Turkic tribal confederations of Central Asia and modern Turkey. One of the intended effects of this effort was to diminish the role played by the Ottoman dynasty – portrayed by their nationalist successors as an initially pure and heroic, but ultimately corrupted and decayed establishment – in the evolution of key institutions that also constituted the central pillars of the new republic: the military and the bureaucracy. Certain pre-Ottoman Turkic administrative and military traditions indeed survived into the Ottoman and republican periods. Yet as the following pages will try to demonstrate, it would be impossible to get a clear picture of the role of the state and perceptions of

authority and legitimacy in modern Turkey, without taking into account how these concepts were constructed and evolved within the Ottoman context.

The state, both as an abstract entity and in terms of the physical institutions it comprises, is at the heart of modern Turkey's national identity. This point cannot be overemphasised. Since the nineteenth century, the state has remained the only constant force, while the entity's geographic borders, demographic composition and socio-economic infrastructure have fluctuated wildly and repeatedly. Indeed the Ottoman state's resilience was a remarkable feat that has been surpassed by few others in history, and none in the history of Iran. As many as twelve different dynasties ruled Iran in part or in whole during the reign of the Ottoman dynasty, which spans over six centuries. Yet despite the frequent turnover of political authority, the idea of Iran as a linguistic and geographic entity has endured. Nor did Iran experience such a profoundly traumatising demographic transformation as the Ottoman Empire and Turkey did between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, when entire populations were uprooted, exchanged or annihilated. "Present-day Iranians live more or less within the same borders as their great-grandparents," notes Abrahamian (2008: 1). This is not the case for many citizens of modern Turkey, or the grandchildren of non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

In short, as a building block of modern Turkish national identity, we can speak of a tendency (amongst power holders as well as significant portions in society) to view and revere the state as a patriarchal entity that is inalienable from, but also elevated above, society in Turkey. Such a patriarchal predilection is very much present in Iran as well. However here, it is counteracted by the long standing tradition that pits political authority, often seen as fleeting and 'foreign', against society. As this overview demonstrates, we are bound to have different reference points when looking at the historical roots of authority and legitimacy in Iran and Turkey. In the Turkish case, references to the ideational and institutional evolution of the state will loom large, whereas in Iran the emphasis will inevitably be on the more elusive turf of culture and tradition, which have shaped institutions across a much longer time span and countless governments.

From *Farr* to Shi'ism: Divine sanction in Iran

The right to rule is one of the most enduring and controversial themes running through the history of Iran. References to 'divine sanction' (*farr-e izadi*, henceforth *farr*) are traced to the early Median populations and feature prominently in Achaemenid and Sassanid era inscriptions and symbolisms (Root 1979). *Farr* indicates the qualities a king must possess in order to obtain God's grace, without which his rule would be illegitimate. In Zoroastrian imagery, the possession of *farr* was marked by a mystical aura, or halo, around the sovereign's head; a symbolism later adopted by Abrahamic religions to denote sainthood (Filippani-Ronconi 1978: 52).

Divinely obtained legitimacy constitutes the basis of Weber's concept of patriarchal patrimonialism.³⁹ In patriarchal patrimonial systems, kings are not bound by an earthly contract; they are "above society and not just at the head of it" (Katouzian 2000: 8). Yet unlike the European concept of divine right of kings, which Weber's analysis is based on, the Iranian idea of *farr* embodies distinct secular and practical provisions concerning the conduct of rulers, very much akin to the Confucian concept of the Mandate of Heaven. According to these provisions, *farr* could not be inherited or obtained by brute force. It was invested according to one's personal worth, judged not only by his success as a military commander, but also his commitment to Mazdaism, the highly moralistic precepts of which emphasised personal choice and responsibility (Filippani-Ronconi 1978: 62).⁴⁰

³⁹ Weber identifies three types of legitimacy based on the virtues attributed to governments by their subjects or citizens: traditional, charismatic and rational-legal. Within the traditional type, Weber pinpoints 'patriarchal patrimonialism' – where the entire domain is considered the household of the ruler (the patriarch) and legitimacy is derived from tradition – as a pre-bureaucratic system of domination most distant to idea of the modern (rational-legal) state. In contrast to feudalism, which Weber calls the 'estate-type patrimonialism', in patriarchal patrimonialism society is essentially divided between the ruler and the ruled, with only the administrators (or servants) in the middle, leaving no room for a formal class structure to take root and develop. According to this contentious normative framework, feudalism is the European form of patrimonialism, and precursor to constitutional monarchism, while patriarchal patrimonialism is the 'Oriental' version. See "Patriarchalism and Patrimonialism" in Weber (1968: 1006 – 1070). For a detailed discussion of the "belief theory" and the subjectivist standpoint see Merquior (1979).

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the enduring relevance of *farr* in legitimation of authority in Iran see Katouzian (2003).

According to the Zoroastrian book of *Zadspram*, a king's legitimacy depended on three qualities: his attachment to the faith, his efforts to fight his personal evil (namely pride, conceit and falsehood), and fulfilling of his 'duty' towards the people, which is understood as delivering justice, charity and good fortune.⁴¹ Another Zoroastrian scripture, *Zamyad Yasht*, explains that "the Glory that cannot be forcibly seized" is bestowed upon those who endeavour to improve the world of Ahura Mazda through "good thought, good word and good deed".⁴² Ferdowsi's eleventh century epic *Shahnameh*, which has over 450 references to *farr*, recounts the legend of the Turanian king Afrasiab, who tries three times to seize the kingly glory by force, and fails each time due to his tyrannical and deceitful nature (Bashiri 1994).

Divine sanction was also conditional and non-permanent: a king could lose his *farr* if he became unjust or unable to maintain peace and security within his realm. In such a case, *farr* would be bestowed upon someone else, the figure of a divinely ordained saviour. Crucially, the new recipient of *farr* did not need to belong to the ruling dynasty (as it could not simply be inherited) or have any noble credentials at all, which meant the top post within the realm was theoretically open to all mortals. In theory, this was a rather meritocratic way to ensure just rule (Soudavar 2003: 122). In practice, however, the fluctuating nature of *farr* and its dependence on the personality and achievements of the ruler made continuous dynastical legitimacy an elusive ambition. Similar to the Chinese concept of the Mandate of Heaven, the idea that a ruler could lose his legitimacy meant that revolt against an illegitimate ruler was not only considered justified, but also a duty. In Katouzian's view, this condition led to frequent crises of succession and made revolts a central character of Iranian politics and history. The "dialectic of state and society" chronically destabilised Iran, rendering it a "short-term society" (*jame-ye kutah moddat*) (Katouzian 2000: 6).

⁴¹ This formulation appears to stem from a practical need to "propagate a unifying and quasi-universal concept of just authority over a vast empire." The concept of a divinely sanctioned, just and benevolent king was the most easily translatable attribute for the empire's diverse constituencies. (Filippini-Ronconi 1978: 59; Soudavar 2003: 89 – 92).

⁴² For a translation of *Zamyad Yasht* ("Hymn to the Earth") see <http://www.avesta.org/ka/yt19sbe.htm>

Another point that needs emphasis is the availability of divine sanction to all human beings. According to the ninth century Zoroastrian text *Denkard*, legitimate authority was originally bestowed in its entirety on one ruler, King Yima (Jamshid in *Shahnameh*) who ruled all of humanity for three hundred years, until he became proud and conceited. Upon his eventual fall from God's grace, it was divided into three parts reflecting the three classes of people: the warriors (including kings and princes), the priests, and "the producers of material wealth" – or the bulk of Iran's working population (Filippani-Ronconi 1978: 61 – 63).⁴³ This division put the common people (understood interchangeably as the masses, the workers or merchants and traders, i.e. *bazaaris*) on the political map of Iran.

Here, the universalistic dualism between good and evil enshrined in Mazdaism – one of the earliest faiths to move beyond cult and totemism to address moral issues, with great influence on all three Abrahamic religions – plays a governing role (Axworthy 2007: 11). Mazdaism places currency on the individual's responsibility to shape his own destiny by committing to 'the truth' (formulated in the principle of 'good thought, good word, good deed') and refraining from evil. Thus the goal of every person should be to attain 'perfection' that is symbolised by the possession of *farr*. This notion leaves ample room for any individual to strive for greatness and prepares the ground for a vast literature on heroism, leadership and martyrdom.

One of the most cherished heroes of the *Shahnameh* is the blacksmith Kaveh, who leads a mass revolution and helps the rightful king-to-be Fereydun in his mission to dethrone the despotic ruler Zahhak. Their legend embodies some of the central themes that are frequently invoked in traditional as well as modern Iranian politics: the loss of legitimacy, the rightful struggle against injustice, and resistance to foreign rule (the tyranny of Zahhak, a Babylonian king, has been understood as a metaphor for Arab oppression in Ferdowsi's epic). To this day, Kaveh and Fereydun remain popular symbols in Iran, frequently invoked in reference to modern-day politics. Indeed, the historical importance of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* is based not only on its role in preserving Persian language at a time of Arabic domination, but also in bridging Muslim Iran with its pre-Islamic past

⁴³ For *Denkard* see <http://www.avesta.org/denkard/dk3s.html>

in the popular consciousness. Like a number of other Zoroastrian traditions, such as Nowruz and Mihragan, the idea of justice-based divine sanction survived the Arab conquest and the spread of Islam and regained its institutional prominence when the Safavids declared Ithna Ashari (Twelver) Shi'ism as the official faith of Iran in the sixteenth century.

The myth of Imam Hossein's marriage to Shahrbanu, the daughter of the last Sassanid emperor Yazdegerd III, although highly dubious as a historical fact, nonetheless facilitated a psychological reconciliation between Islam (Shi'ism in particular) and Iran's pre-Islamic traditions (Momen 1987). "Shi'sm," wrote Reza Behnam, "essentially mitigated Arab encroachment in the minds of the vanquished." (1986: 54). With its emphasis on the perfection and divine legitimacy of the Imamate, and the ideas of justice and struggle against tyranny characterised by the tragic martyrdom of Hossein bin Ali in Karbala, Shi'ism eventually came to represent both a distinct Islamic identity for Iran, and an unmistakable Iranian mark on Islam.

The traditional understanding of political legitimacy as outlined above has given rise to a built-in tension between the ruler and the ruled in Iran. The universal availability of divine sanction granted the common man a remarkable voice. It also legitimised two conflicting forces at the same time: patriarchal rule and rebellion. This dichotomy resonates in modern Iran. Reza Shah Pahlavi, for instance, was widely perceived as Iran's long-awaited saviour when he emerged out of virtual obscurity to impose order on a chaotic country and resist foreign encroachment (epitomised by his refusal to ratify the 1919 treaty that would expand oil concessions to Britain). That he was also an iron-fisted dictator did not seem to put his legitimacy into question at least until the latter half of his reign (Katouzian 2000: 14 – 15; Abrahamian 2008: 63 – 97). His successor, Mohammad Reza Shah, was very much aware of the traditional significance of divine sanction. He wanted to project an image of himself as a visionary reformer and a patriotic leader, fulfilling the modern requirements of *farr*. He was more successful, however, in convincing his immediate entourage and western supporters than the people of Iran, who had found a new Fereydun in the charismatic leadership of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini and new Kavehs in the supporters of the revolution.

Justice lies at the heart of the Iranian concept of legitimacy, but what exactly constitutes a 'just ruler' remains ambiguous and subjective in practice. On balance, much appears to depend on the ruler's personal success – or rather, the perception of success – as a military commander and a skilful administrator. Darius, Khosrow I and Abbas I were such figures, and they personify the idea of the just ruler. The verdict is less clear on Reza Shah, who lost much of his popularity due not only to his increasingly autocratic personal rule but also his failure to prevent the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in 1941, which culminated in his dethronement. Success, to a notable extent, depends on conditions and circumstances beyond one's immediate control, such as the availability of resources and the presence of powerful external rivals, internal power struggles and political intrigues. Does failure, then, automatically imply illegitimacy, and conversely, does the legitimacy of a rebellion rest largely on its popularity and success?

The answer may not be a straightforward 'yes' as some scholars argue.⁴⁴ Another modern Iranian leader, Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq, was ultimately unsuccessful in his attempt to nationalise the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and ended his days in relative obscurity under house arrest. Yet even when the details of the coup that toppled him in 1953 were little known and the shah's regime made a concerted effort to portray the old man as an obstinate fanatic, Mosaddeq remained widely popular among Iranians, many of whom saw him as a legitimate champion of Iran's national interests; a secular martyr of sorts (Kinzer 2003). What appears clear instead, and therefore worthy of repeated emphasis, is the power of the 'popular' in Iran. In other words, it is the *social perception of justice*, shaped by tradition and the circumstances, that plays the governing role in ascribing legitimacy to regimes and governments, as well as to rebellions and revolutions, in Iran.

⁴⁴ See "Arbitrary Rule: A Theory of State, Politics and Society in Iran" in Katouzian (2000: 1 – 25).

From *beylik* to empire: The Ottoman idea of statehood

In contrast to Iran, the popular featured less prominently in the Ottoman concept of legitimacy. The dynasty did assert a divine 'aura of sanctity' to emphasise the justness of its claim over a vast territory and its diverse populations, the leadership of Islam and patronage of the Orthodox Church. Nonetheless, as Karateke notes, the Ottoman production of legitimacy bore "a distinctly elitist character. At least in its written texts it did not address the general public and was meant to serve philosophical and one might even say aesthetic demands." (Karateke and Reinkowski 2005: 7). This is not to suggest that the Ottoman state was cut off from society. On the contrary, part of the explanation for the empire's impressive longevity rests in its ability to devise an efficient administrative system that was able to accommodate diversity, take into account local customs and permit decentralisation, at least until it entered irreversible decline by the eighteenth century.

Even so, the pyramid-shaped structure of the Ottoman state, with the monarch sitting alone at the top, reflects a hierarchical conception of power and state-society relationship. In theory at least, Ottoman sovereigns appeared less constrained than their Iranian counterparts to negotiate their personal legitimacy with the Muslim clergy (*ulama*) or their subjects. What explains this difference? The answer to this question appears to lie at the geopolitics of the fourteenth and fifteenth century Anatolia, where the Ottoman polity emerged and replaced the thousand-year-old Byzantine Empire.

The early Ottoman state was among two-dozen tribal principalities (*beylik*, from 'bey' or lord) that gained independence after the demise of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rûm in the thirteenth century. The political structure in the early Ottoman polity was feudal. Reflective of the traditions of nomadic Turkmen tribes, Ottoman rulers until Mehmed II, the conqueror of Constantinople, were not so much absolute monarchs, but rather 'first among equals' in a frontier state at the border of Islamic and Christian realms. Warlords who led the expansion into the Christian Balkans held significant sway over the early Ottoman sultans. These aristocrats, in turn, were dependent on their overlord who, with his access

to the Anatolian hinterland, provided them with a market for 'frontier booty' and a steady flow of holy warriors (Kunt and Woodhead 1995: 12 – 19).⁴⁵

This feudal arrangement gave way to a more centralised structure after the mid-fourteenth century as Ottoman rulers relied increasingly on non-Muslim converts carefully recruited from the newly conquered territories and trained to serve in the state's elite military and bureaucratic posts. The introduction of the *devşirme* (convert) system and the creation of a highly disciplined central military apparatus (the *janissary*) took place at the expense of the peripheral warlords, whose status and power gradually waned. The new arrangement gave the Ottomans a distinct military advantage over their decentralised adversaries on both frontiers: the Muslim principalities of Anatolia and the tribal confederations of Iran on the East and the feudal Balkan princedoms on the West. A comparable central military structure, with the *gholam* (slave) army at its core, was only established in Iran during the reign of Shah Abbas I in the early seventeenth century.

The great leap from sultanate to empire and the reformulation of the Ottoman concept of statehood occurred as a consequence of this military superiority, which culminated in the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The inclusion of 'the city' to the Islamic realm, an ambitious dream first articulated by Prophet Mohammad, not only contributed enormously to the prestige and charisma of the Ottoman sultans (and hence to their legitimacy in the eyes of their Muslim subjects). It also transformed the Ottoman state from a regional sultanate into a cosmopolitan empire with a claim to global leadership. In the process, the Ottoman state adopted several key institutional features of the empire it had supplanted. One example is the assumption of the title '*Kayser-i Rûm*', or Caesar of the Romans, by Sultan Mehmed II. In the words of Kunt, Mehmed "regarded himself as a sultan in the Islamic tradition and a great khan in the Inner Asian mould as well as a 'kaiser' of the Romans or the Rumi, Byzantine and Turkish." (Kunt and Woodhead 1995: 21).

⁴⁵ *Ghaza*, or the expansion of the Islamic realm through conquest, was a politically expedient and economically lucrative enterprise accommodating religious diversity from the very beginning. According to Kafadar, "the culture of Anatolian Muslim frontier society allowed the coexistence of religious syncretism and militancy, adventurism and idealism." (1995: 89). Some of the warlords that led the expansion were not even Muslims. Mihail, for example, was a renegade Byzantine governor.

Exactly how much the Ottomans borrowed from Byzantium was a polemical debate during the first half of the twentieth century, an authoritative account of which can be found in Kafadar's *Between Two Worlds* (1995). That debate saw European Orientalists argue that 'uncivilised Turks' owed much of their state tradition to Greeks, and Turkish nationalists retort, in a bid to assert modern Turkey's right to nationhood, that the Ottoman idea of statehood had its roots in Turco-Persian traditions.⁴⁶ Beyond the polemic, it is safe to suggest that both the Persian and Byzantine modes of administration greatly shaped the Ottoman state architecture (Kafadar 1995: 140). In the sense that the overwhelming authority of the central government became the most obvious characteristic of the empire, with the ruler standing at the pinnacle of legitimate secular authority, and the church remaining throughout a department of the state, the post-1453 Ottoman Empire certainly resembled Byzantium (Mango 1980: 31; Whittow 1996: 299).

The sultans' expansive legal remit became manifest in a series of imperial laws and investitures (*kanun* and *berat*) promulgated between the late fifteenth and the late sixteenth centuries. Starting with the reforms of Mehmed II, these laws and investitures institutionalised the authority of the central government, formalised the organisation of religious communities into autonomous socio-political clusters (*millets*) and regulated provincial administration, finances and land tenure within the empire. In an attempt to assert the state's claim to the absolute ownership of all arable land and to raise funds for the janissary corps, Mehmed II confiscated land that was controlled by local aristocrats and independent religious foundations (*vakıf*).⁴⁷ His legal code (*kanunname*) of 1475 sought to bring these foundations and artisans' guilds (*ahi*), which had formed the basis of civil society in Anatolia since the Seljuk era, under the supervision of the central government, albeit with limited success (Karpas 2008: 47 – 48).

The imperial laws and decrees issued during the reign of Mehmed II defined the basic institutions of the Ottoman state, which were elaborated and

⁴⁶ For the main academic debate see Gibbons (1916), Wittek (1938), and Köprülü (1931; 1992).

⁴⁷ For most of its history, the state was "the only legitimate power to organise land and labor in the Ottoman Empire." The state leased the land as freehold either directly to peasants, to cavalrymen (*sipahi*) on a non-hereditary basis (*timar*) in exchange for tax returns and support during the sultan's military campaigns, or to religious endowments (*vakıf*). For a discussion on the origins and the outcomes of Mehmed II's land reforms, see Özel (1999).

refined under his successors, Bayezid II, Selim I and Suleyman I, and survived more or less intact until the nineteenth century. With the sultan at the top, the central administrative mechanism represented the 'eternal state' (*devlet-i ebed müddet*) responsible for preserving the 'world order' (*nizam-ı alem*), a concept further supported by the implementation of Sunni legalism in the late sixteenth century. The administrative formula for preserving the world order was the 'circle of equity' (*da'ire-i adliye*), articulated by the sixteenth century Ottoman theologian Hasan Kafi as follows:

Kingship and sultanate can exist only with men, that is, with troops. There can be no troops except with wealth. There can be no wealth except if the country is prosperous. The country can be prosperous only through justice and good government. (Hegen 2005: 65)

Ottoman administrators understood that order could not be maintained simply by brute force. Legitimacy in the eyes of the empire's diverse group of subjects was essentially maintained through a number of measurable ways, including the provision of welfare, order and a reliable justice system, along with the perpetuation of an image of the sultan as victorious, magnanimous and religious (Karateke and Reinkowski 2005: 39 – 52). Akarlı notes that despite its extensive legal and political remit, the central state in the Ottoman Empire opted to delegate its authority. The Ottoman legal system allowed a considerable degree of autonomy to "relatively organized segments of the population in handling their affairs and internal differences according to their own custom" as long as public peace and order were retained. "These segments ranged from tribes, villages, residents of the same urban quarters, and artisanal groups (*esnaf* or *ta'ife*) in the marketplace to religious communities (*ta'ife* or *cemaat jama'a*) and provinces at large." (Akarlı 2010: 72).

The central state's legitimacy in the eyes of its subjects and its practical authority over the vast domain began to deteriorate when this 'circle of equity' became dysfunctional largely as a result of growing financial burdens and military and economic encroachment from Europe. From the late eighteenth century onwards, peripheral forces, including a new class of local notables (*ayans*), became resurgent as central authority gradually weakened. This set off a

series of attempts throughout the nineteenth century by Ottoman administrators to build a modern centralised state apparatus in the European image to restore ‘public peace and order’ and the state’s authority over society. During this process, however, as resources diminished and the practical links between state and society became severed, the state’s rule over the populace became increasingly arbitrary.

Another notable transformation to the Ottoman idea of statehood was what Weber refers to as the “routinisation of charisma” of the sultans from the late sixteenth century onwards. Unlike their illustrious ancestors, many of the latter-day Ottoman sultans became figureheads, withdrawn from the affairs of the state. Over time, the empire’s administration passed into the hands of viziers, and later, westernised bureaucrats and military officers.⁴⁸ Bound by tradition and the state’s bureaucratic rituals, the personal charisma of Ottoman sultans was gradually attributed to an abstract notion of the state, which was seen as the provider of order (Heper 1980). As the fate of eleven sultans would prove, they could even be deposed or assassinated, and replaced with a more favoured candidate from within the same dynasty, in the interest of the state.

State vs. Clergy: Institutionalisation of religious orthodoxy in Iran and Turkey

The institutionalisation of Sunni legalism in the Ottoman Empire and Ithna Ashari Shi’ism in Safavid Iran as state doctrine in the sixteenth century occurred as a result of two interrelated motivations on both sides: an effort to delegitimise each other’s claim to moral authority as part of a mounting power struggle over Eastern Anatolia; and the need to formulate an institutional rationale to accommodate the transformation towards urban-based, bureaucratic empire (Dressler 2005; Mitchell 2009; 19 – 58). However, these contemporaneous processes yielded markedly different results for the two polities in terms of state organisation.

⁴⁸ Notable exceptions include the reigns of Murad IV, Mahmud II and Abdulhamid II.

In the Ottoman case, the gradual move away from heterodox Turco-Islamic traditions into canonical Sunni Islam, hastened by conquests in the Muslim Middle East and the transfer of the caliphate to the Ottoman dynasty, further legitimised and consolidated the supreme position of the sultan. Conversely in Iran, the marginalisation of the millenarian Sufism adhered to by the early Turkmen nomad followers of the Safavid Shah Ismail and the subsequent restoration of Persian bureaucratic traditions under Tahmasp eventually undermined the authority of the ruler and placed the legitimacy of secular governments on uncertain ground. The reasons for this divergence can be found in the different interpretations of legitimate authority in Sunni and Shi'a Islam.

Ayat 59 of *surah* an-Nisa in the Quran instructs believers to obey Allah and the Prophet, as well as "those charged with authority among you". Early Sunni scholars interpreted this *surah* in a way that allowed caliphs, sultans or other able administrators – in short, powerful men that rose from among the Muslim community (*umma*) and worked to protect it – to be considered as legitimate authorities. Pragmatism and survival instincts explained this interpretation: the Prophet had left no clear guideline for succession, allowing early scholars of Islam "the freedom to contemplate and experiment" with different ways of state organisation (Behnam 1986: 63). In a bid to legitimise the authority of the Abbasid rulers as well as the Umayyads before them, who had seized the caliphate through political strife, influential eleventh century theologians like al-Ghazali and al-Mawali emphasised stability, even if it was authoritarian, over anarchy (Lambton 1981: 124; Kedourie 1992: 7 - 9). In other words, *de facto* power, as long as it served the interest of the Islamic community and maintained public peace and order was seen as legitimate. This principle is known as *maslahat*, translated roughly as expediency, or the pragmatic prioritisation of public welfare in an otherwise hostile world.

The principle of *maslahat* was rejected by the Shi'a, who did not recognise as legitimate the first three Rashidun caliphs and particularly the Umayyads, whose reign for the followers of Ali became synonymous to tyranny and injustice; central themes in the Shi'a theology. Legitimate political and religious authority rested exclusively with the divinely sanctioned Imams who were direct

descendants of Mohammad and Ali and were considered, both as private men and as rulers, to be infallible; a criterion notably absent for the legitimate ruler in the Sunni tradition. All other 'earthly' claims to absolute authority were considered oppressive and unjust.

According to the Ithna Ashari Shi'a doctrine, the twelfth Imam disappeared (or went into occultation) in 872 AD and will eventually reappear as Mahdi, or saviour, to restore peace and justice to the world. In his absence, it is considered the duty of the learned men of religion, the *ulama*, to guide and preserve the community of the faithful; a role firmly engrained in the institutional genes of Shi'ism during centuries of existence as a stateless protestant minority sect trying to survive under hostile Sunni governments (Kedourie 1992: 78). Thus when Ismail endorsed Twelver Shi'ism as the official religion of his dynasty, he also reintroduced the institutional double-headedness between the temporal (the secular government) and the sacred (the *ulama*), which had been a part of Iranian state tradition before the Arab conquests.

The *ulama* in the Ottoman Empire was subservient to the state to a notable degree. The position of the *şeyhülislam*, the highest ranking religious official, was elevated considerably during the rule of Suleyman I, and some *şeyhülislams* had decisive influence on the development of Ottoman and Islamic legal traditions. Yet even then the *şeyhülislam* remained a servant of the sultan and could not interfere directly in government affairs, unless consulted (Karateke and Reinkowski 2005: 27). There are accounts of when *şeyhülislams* refrained from expressing opinion in order not to contradict the authority of the state. Likewise, although seldom practiced, the sultan could replace a *şeyhülislam* if the two disagreed on key policy issues. Not all the religious clerics in the Ottoman Empire were on the government payroll: *medreses* produced many scholars who did not work for the sultan. But these scholars also benefited from the numerous state endowments that sustained the *medreses* and *zawiyas* (religious schools and monasteries), mosques and libraries. While it would be misleading to present either the Ottoman or the Iranian *ulama* as homogenous groups, it is safe to argue that the latter was more autonomous from the government than the former.

While the Ottoman government closely monitored the private funding of the office of the *şeyhülislam* and local religious judges (*qadî*), in Iran the *ulama* enjoyed extensive financial freedoms. Funded directly by public endowments, they were able to operate an expansive network of religious schools and foundations that commanded significant socio-political influence under limited government interference. The loss of Najaf and Karbala, the traditional centres of Shi'a scholarship in modern day Iraq, to the Ottomans in the sixteenth century, further limited Iranian shahs' control over the clergy, granting popular religious figures a valuable refuge in times of dispute with the central government. For instance, Grand Ayatollah Mirza Hassan Shirazi triggered the Tobacco Protests of 1891 from Samarra in Iraq, and it was during his 16-year exile in Najaf that Ayatollah Khomeini devised a radical political agenda for Shi'ism and led the mounting opposition against Mohammad Reza Shah (Keddie 2003: 170 – 214).

The institutionalisation of Sunni and Shi'a legalism further defined the legal remit of Ottoman and Iranian rulers. The idea of *maslahat* reinforced the Ottoman concept of 'world order'. The acceptance of the dynasty's authority as legitimate by the Sunni *ulama* allowed Ottoman rulers to promulgate secular laws (*kanun*) and justify them in the name of religiously provisioned order. It was in the keeping with *maslahat* that the Ottoman *ulama* sanctioned Mehmed II's *kanunname*, which included the highly controversial legalisation of fratricide in order to prevent a succession crisis. Suleyman I was known to his subjects as 'Kanunî', or lawmaker, on the basis of his legal reforms. The modernising and secularising reform edicts of 1839 and 1856 were similarly justified by religious edicts (*fatwa*) even though they were widely unpopular among the empire's Muslim community. In 1826, Sultan Mahmud II dismissed his *şeyhülislam*, who would refuse to issue an edict supporting the abolition of the janissary corps, and replaced him with a more compliant one.

In contrast, according to the Shi'a tradition only a divinely sanctioned Imam could make laws. In the absence of the Mahdi, the task of interpreting the divine law to reach a legal decision (*ijtihad*) was vested in the *mojtahed*, or qualified scholars of Islam, instead of the temporal ruler – another practical consequence of centuries of stateless existence for the Shi'a. The basic tenet of administrative organisation in Shi'a Iran from the Safavids until the Islamic

Revolution can be understood as a trade-off between protection provided by the political establishment in exchange for religious endorsement from the clergy.

This is not to suggest that the Shi'a clergy was actively and continuously involved in government affairs from the beginning. In fact, a strong quietist tradition that decreed political inactivity until the return of the Mahdi remained prevalent among the *ulama* until the faith became politicised in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Keddie 1984). Coupled with a growing practical predilection towards stability, the religious institution often struck the same chord with the political establishment, particularly during those periods when the central government appeared strong and the ruler popular. But from the nineteenth century onwards, the *mojtahed*, either in reaction to perceived injustice or in an attempt to preserve the traditional social structures, did not refrain from using their legal influence to challenge the government.

The subservient position of the *ulama* in the Ottoman Empire and the autonomous role of their Iranian counterparts were highlighted under the republican regimes. In Kemalist Turkey, the office of the *şeyhülislam* was replaced with the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*); a state department controlled by the secularising military-bureaucratic guardians. Islam, however, has remained a powerful societal force and consistently wielded influence on modern Turkish politics. In Iran, invasion, regime change and constant political instability of the eighteenth century, followed by a century of weak, decentralised government under Qajar rule, with an increasingly aggressive European imperialism in the backdrop, cemented the *ulama's* status as the country's most stable and influential institution; an image the Pahlavi shahs both acknowledged and fought hard to undermine (Shakibi 2010: 38 – 42). In the aftermath of Nadir Shah's tumultuous reign and by the Qajar era, shah's legitimacy came to rely not only on "how well he provided for his subjects' welfare and defended them", but also now on "how he supported the Shi'i clerical hierarchy as it developed more and more autonomous power and status." (Tucker 2005: 1 – 16).

The 1907 supplements to the Iranian Constitution, establishing a committee of *mojtahed* to oversee the Islamic legality of legislation proposed by the parliament (*Majlis*), were manifestation of the *ulama's* growing involvement

in state affairs. Although never fully implemented, the Supplementary Fundamental Laws served as a precursor to Khomeini's *velayet-e faqih* theory and the influential Council of Guardians in the Islamic Republic (Kedourie 1992: 88; Afary 1994: 36 – 37; Katouzian 2000: 43).

Change and continuity in the age of reform and revolution

The nineteenth and the twentieth centuries were defined by turbulent and often traumatising change impacting both the Ottoman/Turkish and Iranian states and societies. Long convinced that they occupied the centre of the world, the Ottomans and the Iranians slowly awoke to the reality that they now inhabited the periphery of a new world order, defined by the economic and territorial ambitions of European (and Russian) imperialism. In the context of increasing geopolitical and psychological marginalisation, nostalgia for bygone glory days, coupled with a realisation of the bankruptcy (both economic and social) of the old system created fertile ground for new and radical ideas to emerge. Crucially, in both polities, the ideas that had the most profound impact were those that successfully infused elements of modern European political thought into traditional concepts of authority and legitimacy.

Two common external factors contributed to this sense of marginalisation: the Ottomans by the eighteenth century and the Qajars by the nineteenth had become engulfed in lengthy, costly and mostly unsuccessful defensive wars against ambitious imperial rivals, particularly Russia. At the same time, both were being integrated into the emerging global economy. Flung unprotected into competition with industrialising western powers and their manufactured goods, the predominantly agrarian pre-industrial Ottoman and Qajar economies experienced radical shifts in production patterns and trade volumes, resulting in rising inflation, excessive taxation, mounting foreign debt and the institutionalisation of a culture of corruption (Issawi 1971; Pamuk 2001). As their political and economic fortunes declined, the Ottoman and Qajar states assumed an increasingly arbitrary character with state officials being seen as “plunderers of their own society” (Katouzian 2000: 175).

The Ottoman case

Socio-economic change, and reaction to it from the state, occurred earlier in the Ottoman Empire than in Qajar Iran, partly due to the former's geopolitical proximity to Europe and the existence within its boundaries of large non-Muslim communities that had direct access to western goods and ideas. By the late eighteenth century, the 'circle of equity' that had defined classical Ottoman administration was largely broken as a result of growing economic and financial problems. With land turning into a source of revenue rather than military retinue, a tax-farming scheme was introduced, leading to the rise of a new class of local notables (*ayans*) who collected taxes on behalf of the imperial government and served as an intermediary between the 'Sublime Porte' and the population in the provinces. Increasing tax burden without a corresponding rise in productivity led to popular unrest among agricultural workers, who still formed the backbone of the Ottoman economy in the nineteenth century. Rebellions proliferated among the non-Muslim *millets*, who were now armed with the revolutionary ideal of nationalism, as well as the empire's increasingly disgruntled Muslim subjects.⁴⁹

In response, throughout the nineteenth century the Ottoman state carried out an ambitious project of modernisation and reform, whose main aim was to restore the authority and the legitimacy of the central government and its ability to maintain order throughout the realm (Heper 1980: 39). This was a process characterised by two simultaneous power struggles with lasting impacts on modern Turkey's institutional character: one between the centre and the provinces, and the other *within* the state, between the sultan and an increasingly influential class of westernised bureaucrats and officers.

Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808 – 1839) and his grandson Abdulhamid II (r. 1876 – 1909) were both ambitious modernisers and ardent believers in the absolute authority of the central state. Both rose to power at a time when their personal positions, the institutional authority of the crown and the political sovereignty of their domains were being threatened by numerous domestic and foreign challenges. Mahmud II owed the throne to the powerful governor (*ayan*)

⁴⁹ For the causes of Ottoman decline, see Göçek (1996), Pamuk (2001) and Ortaylı (2008).

of Ruscuk province, Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, who marched into the Ottoman capital to suppress a janissary rebellion that had killed Mahmud II's reformist predecessor, Selim III. In exchange for this support, the new sultan agreed to sign a pact of alliance, known as *Sened-i Ittifak*, in which the state guaranteed land ownership and hereditary rights to the *ayans*.⁵⁰ In his early years in throne, Mahmud II had to contend with restive janissaries as well as ambitious provincial governors. One such governor, Mohammad Ali of Egypt, threatened the empire with full scale invasion, which was only averted after a desperate Mahmud II appealed for Russian help.

Abdulhamid II rose to power on the shoulders of the powerful bureaucrats of the *Tanzimat* (Reform) era of 1836 – 1876, who had previously deposed both his uncle and his brother and forced the young monarch to promulgate the empire's first constitution. The empire that Abdulhamid inherited was losing territory and facing disintegration as a result of financial bankruptcy, military defeat (most heavily inflicted by the forces of Tsar Alexander II in the war of 1877-78) and growing nationalist uprisings across its Christian communities. Labelled by the Russian tsar as 'the sick man of Europe', the Ottoman state's inevitable collapse and partitioning was anticipated both by the Great Powers and smaller nationalist aspirants.

Both men were thus convinced that the only way to ensure their personal safety, the authority of their office and the integrity of their domain was through building a thoroughly modern central state apparatus in the European model that would monopolise decision-making. Consequently, they invested heavily in creating a full-fledged bureaucracy to oversee the complex management of the state machinery, a schooling system expanding into the provinces modelled after Western examples, modern military institutions as well as improved transportation and communication infrastructure across their domain. In 1826, having consolidated his position, Mahmud II abolished the janissary corps and replaced it with a European-style conscript army. He also nullified the agreement with the *ayans* and executed headstrong provincial notables, like Ali Pasha of Tepelena. The authority of the centre over the periphery was further asserted

⁵⁰ Reflecting the aforementioned "routinisation of charisma" the wording of the *Sened* confirmed that this was an agreement between the notables and "the state" – not the sultan.

during the *Tanzimat* era in the Land Code of 1858 and the Provincial Administration Law of 1864 (Heper 1980: 41 – 42).

Abdulhamid II suspended the constitution and the parliament within a year of his reign. His rejection of the *Tanzimat*-era attempt to forge a civic Ottoman identity on the basis of equal rights for all religious communities and embrace of pan-Islamism won him the label of ‘Oriental despot’ in the contemporary European and the Turkish republican historiographies.⁵¹ But despite the change in the political rhetoric, and the growing paranoia that led him to establish a repressive police state against which the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 took place, Abdulhamid’s ambitious modernisation projects were very much a continuation of both the policies of the westernising *Tanzimat* pashas, and his centralising grandfather, Mahmud II. These included the opening of the University of Istanbul in 1900 and 51 new secondary schools, mostly in the provinces, between 1882 and 1884, the connection of Istanbul with Vienna and Baghdad by railroads, and the expansion of modern military academies across the empire.⁵²

Ironically, the greatest opposition to the sultans’ authority – as well as the ultimate demise of their dynasty – emerged from among these new classes of westernised (and westernising) bureaucrats and soldiers trained in Hamidian schools and serving in Mahmud’s modern army. These bureaucrats and officers differed with the sultans on how to reform the legal and the administrative system, but not on the importance of re-establishing the state’s authority and capacity to maintain public peace and order. Both the *Tanzimat* bureaucrats and the ‘Young Turk’ officers who led the 1908 revolution saw themselves foremost as servants of the state.

Crucially, when these bureaucrats and officers seized the reins of power, the patriarchal tendency they displayed was not particularly different from that of the two sultans. Namık Kemal, a prominent ‘Young Ottoman’ critic of Hamidian authoritarianism, described the Ottoman government under the *Tanzimat*

⁵¹ This view has been persuasively challenged by scholars who argue that Abdulhamid’s pan-Islamism was not so much a product of his personal dislike of the West, but rather a highly pragmatic reading of the geopolitics of the time. See for example, Akarlı (1993) and (2006).

⁵² The state-controlled curricula of these schools utilised “European pedagogical techniques to teach modern sciences while at the same time inculcating students with the principles of Islamic morality, Ottoman identity, and loyalty to the sultan”. (Cleveland 2004: 121)

pashas as “the system of many sultans”. The Young Turk officers that rose to prominence with the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 were initially in a coalition with the empire’s cosmopolitan urban intelligentsia, who embraced the slogan ‘liberty, equality and justice’ (*hürriyet, müsavaat, adalet*). But the group’s militaristic impulses led them to eliminate rivals (and allies) by force, culminating in the *coup d’état* by the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Fırkası*, CUP) led by Enver and Talaat pashas against the elected government in 1913. In their secular western image, the Unionist Young Turk officers combined the autocratic statism of French Jacobins and Prussian officers with the Ottoman tradition of guardianship that considered the government “the prerogative of a properly trained elite”; a belief upheld both by the *Tanzimat* pashas and the centralising sultans before them (Akarlı 2006: 356). The military-bureaucratic coalition led by Mustafa Kemal, himself a Young Turk and Unionist, carried this tradition over to the Turkish Republic.

In his review of the changes in the Ottoman judicial system in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Akarlı demonstrates that as the Ottomans grappled with the intractable challenges of decline, the interactive judicial processes “that helped connect the formulations of common good or public interest to the ‘public’ to which it applied” became gradually marginalised and forgotten. “Administrative decisions began to define public interest, which became increasingly hard to distinguish from the interests of the state as defined by the people in charge of it. Thus, the concept of *maslahat* lost its connection to a set of basic rights and conditions that made civic life possible. Rather, it became associated with *raison d’état*.” (2010: 77 – 78)

Ottoman (and later, Turkish) modernisers, in other words, were armed with the self-legitimising philosophy of patriarchal authority that put the state at the centre of the world as the provider of peace and order. But while their predecessors were primarily interested in maintaining a functioning order and thus content with interfering minimally in the public’s affairs as long as taxes were collected, order maintained and symbols of the state respected, the modernising successors were in pursuit of establishing a new order in a changing world. This turned the state into a mechanism of social coercion, transformation and control in the hands of officers, bureaucrats and politicians

with contending ideologies (secular nationalist, Islamist, leftist, etc.) but a shared veneration of the state's supreme authority over society.

The Iranian case

Unlike their Ottoman neighbours, the Qajar rulers of Iran, who only came to power in the late eighteenth century, ending decades of internal strife, lacked the political infrastructure and the resources to carry out a similarly ambitious reform project. The Qajar state was highly decentralised and the central government had little direct control beyond the new capital, Tehran. As such, the Qajar shahs were forced to rely to a great extent on local notables such as tribal leaders, merchants and senior clerics to administer the provinces (Abrahamian 2008: 9). Even at the centre, the state had "few government institutions worthy of the name", including less than a dozen underfunded ministries of limited practical authority, some of which had been controlled by the same families since the early Safavid era (Sheikholislami 1997: 191; Ashraf and Banuazizi 1999: 667 – 677). Despite assuming *farr*-invoking titles such as King of Kings (*Shahanshah*) and Shadow of God (*Zillallah*), the Qajar shahs hardly fulfilled Wittfogel's definition of Oriental despotism as "a political arrangement in which the state is stronger than society". In the twentieth century, Mohammad Reza Shah commanded a much more formidable central state apparatus and adopted similarly grandiose titles including *Shahanshah* and *Aryamehr* (Light of the Aryans). Yet in both instances, the rulers' actual authority was checked by powerful and persistent societal forces.

With a feeble central state structure and a poorly armed and trained military, consisting in large part of tribal contingents, Iran under the Qajars could provide scant resistance against the imperial ambitions of Russia and Britain. Throughout the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth, Russia motivated by territorial expansion and Britain by securing trade routes to India, and later by oil, played an increasingly ruthless game of domination over Iran, leading to the 1907 Anglo-Russian agreement that partitioned the country into three zones of influence (Russian north, British south and a 'neutral' centre). The modern

roots of Iranian suspicion of foreign manipulation can be found in the nineteenth century.⁵³

Humiliating defeats by Russia in 1813 and 1828 on the one hand, and the example of the Ottoman *Tanzimat* on the other, prompted Qajar shahs to attempt at administrative and military reform in the 1830s and then in the 1870s under Naser al-Din Shah, who established the Russian-trained Cossack Brigade; Iran's first organised military in the modern sense.⁵⁴ On the whole, however, these reforms remained intermittent and superficial, largely due to the state's inability to raise the necessary funds. As a result, Qajar rulers came to rely on granting lucrative concessions to foreigners as a means of income; a policy widely despised for its impact on the local economy and for increasing western imperial manipulation and/or cultural influence. The impression that whatever revenue the state managed to accumulate was squandered by corrupt officials and on lavish royal trips to Europe added to the growing popular resentment against the state. Thus by the late nineteenth century, the Qajar state appeared to possess all the typical characteristics of a temporal government that had lost its *farr*: self-interested, corrupt and inept, it had failed to provide for the people's well-being and security, and defend the realm against foreign intervention. Rejecting its authority was justified.

The *ulama's* prominent role in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution has been widely noted.⁵⁵ We should also remember that for the greater part of the struggle, the *ulama* acted in a coalition with a diverse range of societal actors, including disgruntled notables, merchants of the *bazaar*, westernised intellectuals, as well as a number of social democrats, socialists and radicals who were mostly inspired and organised by contemporaneous movements in Russian-controlled Armenia and Azerbaijan. Afary argues that the emphasis the ideologues of the 1960s and the 70s placed on the *ulama* – *bazaari* alliance as a guideline for their struggle against the Pahlavi regime undermined the key role played by this group of socialists and radicals during the Constitutional

⁵³ For a popular satirical depiction of this persistent suspicion, see Iraj Pezeshkzad's classic novel *My Uncle Napoleon*.

⁵⁴ Mirza Hossein Khan Sipah Salar, a diplomat and later Naser-al Din Shah's chief minister spent twelve years in Istanbul observing the *Tanzimat* reforms.

⁵⁵ For a detailed comparison of the Iranian and Ottoman constitutional movements see Sohrabi (2011).

Revolution (1994: 21 – 25). Instead, both Afary and Keddie point to the importance of the ‘radical-religious’ alliance, and particularly the radicals’ conscious decision to reach out to the ‘progressive’ members of the *ulama*, as the decisive factor behind the initial success of the movement (Keddie 1980: 53 – 65; Afary 1994: 32 – 33). Such an alliance, of course, was possible to the extent that the radicals and the *ulama* shared the same goals and principles, namely the struggle against foreign imperialist influence and arbitrary and oppressive government – central themes in revolutionary left, Shi’ism as well as the pre-Islamic Iranian tradition of divine sanction.

In bridging the gap between the secular and the sacred, and in politicising the Shi’a *ulama* as well as the pious masses towards militant action against political authority, the role of influential ideologue/activist Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani should not be ignored. Downplaying his Shi’a background and propagating a pan-Islamic philosophy, al-Afghani offered a lucid way of justifying political activism and modernity within the context of Islamic tradition (Keddie 1972). A contemporary of Garibaldi, Mazzini and Bakunin, al-Afghani and his followers were attracted to the “millenarian and revolutionary strand” that was prominent in Europe during the nineteenth century (Kedourie 1992: 82). He in turn influenced new generations of Muslim activists, from Muhammad Abduh, his student in Egypt, to Ali Shariati, who assumed an inspirational role in the Iranian opposition to Mohammad Reza Shah in the 1960s and 70s.

The radical-religious alliance, a marriage of convenience from the outset, quickly collapsed after the immediate goals of the struggle had been reached. The split became manifest in dramatic fashion when a key clerical supporter of the movement, Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri, switched to the royalist side and issued a *fatwa* condemning the constitutionalists as “atheists” and “secret Bahai’s” (Abrahamian 2008: 50 – 51). In reaction to his support of Mohammad Ali Shah’s 1908 coup against the parliament, Nuri was branded a traitor and executed by the constitutionalist forces that reclaimed Tehran the following year. Following the 1979 revolution, the Khomeinist government rehabilitated Nuri as a martyr who had given his life in defence of the faith; a testament to the enduring rupture not only between the *ulama* and secular left-wing Iranians, but also within the

ulama itself, as well as the emphasis of the 'Islamic' over the 'Republic' in post-1979 Iran (Molavi 2002: 193).

Abrahamian attributes both the success of the Constitutional Revolution and the eventual collapse of the system it put in place to the lack of a viable central state. This view was undoubtedly shared by Reza Shah Pahlavi, a former officer in the Cossack Brigade whose 1921 coup put an end to the constitutional era and set out to westernise and modernise Iran from above. Reza Shah is often compared to his contemporary and fellow authoritarian moderniser, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.⁵⁶ It is true that the Iranian ruler found inspiration in his Turkish counterpart's westernising and secularising reforms. But unlike Atatürk, who inherited a strong state with a functioning bureaucracy and a standing army that was able to impose its will with relative success on a 'weak' population, whose traditional social fabric had been utterly destroyed after decades of war, ethnic cleansing and population exchanges, Reza Shah inherited a weak central state that had to contend with powerful and well-entrenched societal forces. Indeed, as the absolutist architects of the modern Iranian state, the historical role and the ironic fate of the Pahlavi monarchs appear to have more in common with the modernising Ottoman sultans of the nineteenth century, Mahmud II and Abdulhamid II.

Like their Ottoman counterparts, the Pahlavis were firm believers in the divinely ordained traditional authority of the office of the monarch over politics and society, although by then the rationalisation of authority had become secular in theory and modernising in practice. And like the Ottoman sultans, both men assumed power in precarious external and domestic conditions, which convinced them of the need to build a powerful central state apparatus that would empower the crown against social challenges and the country against foreign encroachment. Reza Shah's primary concern and main accomplishment was to establish this absent authority by building railways, nationalising and expanding the telegraph and postal systems, modernising the military and enforcing conscription, crushing tribal dissent and imposing a rigid central tax-collection system. His efforts to impose the state's authority on the *ulama* turned out less successful and fleeting.

⁵⁶ See for example Cronin (1997: 1 – 17), Atabaki and Zürcher (2004).

During the reign of his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, the central state apparatus evolved into a behemoth standing firmly on the triple pillars of bureaucracy, military and extensive court patronage (Farazmand 1989). Yet crucially, like the Qajar state, the Pahlavi regime also failed to maintain a sound social basis. The 'White Revolution' that the shah launched in 1963 was an ambitious social engineering project aimed at weakening the power of provincial landlords and the *ulama* through a mixture of a land redistribution programme, secularising reforms and a series of nationalisation/privatisation and industrialisation initiatives.⁵⁷ But it ended up benefiting a small circle of already privileged Iranians, while creating a large number of independent farmers with too little land and no particular sympathy for the monarchy, and a new urban underclass made up of landless labourers, providing popular ammunition for the brewing uprising.

Although the state did gain significant powers and greater autonomy as a result of the White Revolution, this happened at the expense of its links to the civil society. Growing state repression further alienated the intelligentsia and brought it into coalition with other disgruntled societal forces. In the end, the monarchy was left with a powerful hierarchical state apparatus that fatefully lacked public support. The dynasty's eventual fall in another revolution that followed the pattern of 1905-06 in terms of its root causes and shifting alliances suggests that a regime's political survival in Iran depends to a great extent on its popular legitimacy, rather than only the material strength of its institutions.

⁵⁷ See Pahlavi (1967) for the shah's personal account on the needs for and aims of the White Revolution.

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed various structural factors that have been influential in shaping social and institutional perceptions of authority and legitimacy in Iran and Turkey. I pointed out that the idea of Iran embodies a supra-political quality, which has allowed it to survive as a cultural, linguistic and geographic entity despite centuries of foreign invasion and occupation. Iran, in other words, has been remarkably stable as a socio-cultural and geographic concept, but highly volatile as a political entity, as evidenced by the frequency of episodes of regime change in Iranian history. This has created an antagonistic dualism between state and society, which has become manifest in the numerous popular revolutions targeting sources of political authority that are deemed illegitimate.

In contrast, it is the political authority that has remained fairly constant in what became Turkey in the twentieth century, while everything from borders to languages, demographics to socio-economic infrastructure changed radically after the nineteenth century. The Ottoman state (and dynasty) owed its resilience to a series of unique geopolitical factors as well as to a powerful institutional structure, self-legitimizing ideology built upon Turco-Persian, Byzantine and Sunni traditions, and, at least until the late eighteenth century, a practical ability to accommodate diversity and local customs. This discrepancy is evident in the character of the defining moments of political change in both polities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: while Iranian revolutions pitted the state directly against entrenched societal forces, in Turkey, revolution and reform primarily featured a clash *within* the state among different stakeholders with contrasting recipes for change.

In light of these structural dynamics outlined above, the next chapter will discuss the founding episodes of the Turkish and Iranian republics. At the same time, it will look at the impact of agency in these episodes by examining the policies and ideas of the charismatic founding fathers, Atatürk and Khomeini. The tumultuous founding episodes of the Turkish and Iranian republics and the role played by the charismatic leaders show how structural dynamics and human agency come together in shaping institutions; in this case the hybrid regimes of Kemalist Turkey and Khomeinist Iran.

CHAPTER 3

ATATÜRK AND KHOMEINI: CHARISMATIC, POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF THE HYBRID REGIMES

Introduction

This chapter examines the charismatic leadership, pragmatic politics and the ideological legacy of the Turkish and Iranian republics' founding fathers, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and questions their role in shaping the hybrid nature of the two republics, the institutions of guardianship and the elite factions that would define Turkish and Iranian politics after the leaders' deaths. Atatürk and Khomeini are products of different times and conditions. They are also commonly considered as the antitheses of one another, both in terms of their personality and the development models they advocated for their countries:⁵⁸ a westernised military officer, Atatürk represented the radical but potent belief among the Ottoman and Iranian political elites at the turn of the twentieth century that the only path to modernity was through a complete socio-political transformation that entailed the shedding of 'backward' elements of tradition and religion and a wholesale adoption of western culture and civilisation. His ambitious project inspired many of his contemporaries, including Reza Shah Pahlavi in Iran, whose dynasty was ultimately overthrown by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

In many ways, Ayatollah Khomeini characterises the ideological opposition to Kemalist-style westernisation from above: Khomeini rejected westernisation as a cultural and development model as forcefully as Atatürk embraced it. He saw in the West the root cause of all the maladies that the Muslim world suffered from. Instead, he proposed an 'authentic modernity' that

⁵⁸ See for example Barkey (1995: 151).

entailed an even more ambitious transformation of state and society within an Islamic framework, which also had to be imposed from above. Khomeini made no secret of his abhorrence of the secular order put in place by Atatürk, whom he considered a pharaonic tyrant and “the destroyer of Islam”.⁵⁹ Atatürk, of course, did not live to see Khomeini’s rise as a revolutionary leader in Iran. But Volkan and Itzkowitz are probably justified in speculating in their psychobiography of the Turkish leader that in the charismatic Shi’a cleric Atatürk would find “a Muslim fundamentalist of the sort that would have thrown him into a blind range.” (1984: 324)

Yet for all these differences, the two men also shared important characteristics. Emerging from those institutions that historically negotiated power with the Ottoman and Iranian monarchs, both men became the charismatic leaders of broad-based popular movements that abolished the monarchy and established the Turkish and Iranian republics. They were also pragmatic political strategists, who after leading their movements into victory, ruthlessly consolidated power in their hands and went on to implement radical socio-political engineering projects from above. These tumultuous processes of forging and dissolving coalitions in turn determined the political divisions within and against the new regimes, shaping the threat perception of the Kemalist and Khomeinist elites and prompting them to establish a system of guardianship to protect their political and ideological hegemony.

Atatürk and Khomeini also resembled each other in the way they viewed the world from a dichotomous perspective based on broad cultural divisions. They were essentially motivated by a desire to cure that deep-running feeling of inferiority among the Muslims of the Ottoman and Iranian empires vis-à-vis the West (including Russia) and end what they saw as the foreign imperialist subjugation of a once great people. While the ingredients of their medicines were markedly opposite, their tactics were not: both involved an attempt to create a

⁵⁹ Khomeini said in a speech on 24 August 1986: “In the Islamic world, the ulama were led to believe that they had to obey the tyrants, oppressors, and the holders of naked power. Certain lackeys preferred to obey Atatürk, who destroyed the rule of Islam, instead of obeying the orders of the prophet. [...] Today, the ulama [in Turkey] who are the puppets of the pharaonic forces, teach the people the orders of God and the prophet, but at the same time call on them to obey Atatürk. [...] How can one argue that this is consistent with the notion of [Islamic rulers] whom God ordered us to obey?” Quoted in Özbudun (1990 : 244 – 245).

‘new people’ and a ‘new society’ through ideological indoctrination led by a new class of guardians.

Combining the populism of charisma with the elitism of guardianship that assumed objective knowledge of ‘the truth’, the two men laid the groundwork for what were to transform into hybrid political systems after their deaths. While they ruled as undisputed leaders and enjoyed a supra-political position during their lifetime, their passing brought a host of new challenges to surface that created elite factions and defined the parameters of the political and institutional fissures within the Turkish and Iranian republics in the decades that followed.

Charismatic leaders of popular movements

Critically engaging with the legacies of Atatürk and Khomeini has been a difficult endeavour in Turkey and Iran. Official historiographies in these countries tend to portray their respective founding fathers as “makers of history” who were “unaffected by the world around [them] and who singlehandedly wrought a miracle” by creating modern Turkey and Iran; philosopher-kings “who strove to lay down laws *de omni scibili*” (Hanioğlu 2012: 3 – 6). Yet, while they clearly played hugely important roles in the processes that led to the rise of the Turkish and Islamic republics, the two men were very much products of their time, and their worldviews were shaped by the intellectual, social and political conditions around them.

Mustafa Kemal and Ayatollah Khomeini both reached their political maturity during the periods of authoritarian modernisation and state building in the Ottoman and Pahlavi empires. Furthermore, they were members of those key institutions (the Ottoman military and the Shi’a clergy) that had transitioned into distinct political classes and come to play an active role in negotiating power with the patriarchs during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Finally, within these institutions the two men became identified with activist strands that, often in opposition to the more cautious and conservative mainstream, openly confronted the ruling monarchs and sought a more central role in government. In other words, while their political views were shaped by their

experiences within these institutions, their charismatic authority was built upon the institutions' accumulated prestige, or 'office charisma'.

Yet the two men clearly possessed leadership skills and a level of charisma that few of their contemporaries could match. Mustafa Kemal rose to fame as a master tactician during the Battle of Gallipoli (1915 – 1916) and Khomeini as a gifted orator and unapologetic critic of the Iranian shah during his long exile in Iraq. Weber defines charismatic leadership as an innately revolutionary type of authority, which, in contrast to the bureaucratic and patriarchal authorities, “knows no abstract laws and regulations and no formal adjudication.” Charismatic authority “always results from unusual, especially political or economic situations, or from extraordinary psychic, particularly religious states, or from both together. It arises from collective excitement produced by extraordinary events and from surrender to heroism of any kind” (1968: 1115 – 1121). Both men emerged as leaders amidst extraordinary circumstances and a sense collective excitement.

In Iran, Khomeini gradually established himself as a major oppositional voice in exile as the shah's White Revolution exacerbated existing social tensions, and together with his repressive and arbitrary style of governance, alienated a significant part of the Iranian population. In the Turkish case, the occupation and the planned partitioning of the defeated Ottoman Empire after World War I under the Treaty of Sèvres of August 1920 posed an existential threat to those who still identified themselves with the six-hundred-year-old Ottoman order. Under the leadership of former CUP officers, provincial notables and a nascent Muslim bourgeoisie, Muslim communities across Thrace and Anatolia rejected the treaty's terms and started forming armed resistance groups known as Defence of Rights Associations (*Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyetleri*) (Zürcher 1984). United under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal and his fellow patriotic officers, these associations provided the popular basis and legitimacy of the Grand National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisi*, GNA) founded in opposition to the occupying powers and the British-controlled Ottoman government in Ankara in April 1920.

Both republics were thus borne out of elite-led popular movements that united their future *aristos* and *demos* under a common purpose.⁶⁰ The circumstances and the goals of the two movements, however, were markedly different: The Iranian revolution of 1978 – 79 was the outcome of a mass uprising *against* the Pahlavi regime by a domestic coalition of socio-political interest groups disenfranchised by the regime. Like the Constitutional Revolution of 1905 – 06, this was a manifestation of the ‘dialectic of state and society’ in Iran, as well as a modern urban revolution, where subordinate groups openly aimed to overthrow the monarchical regime and seize control of the state. The Anatolian resistance movement of 1919 – 1923, in contrast, was a mass mobilisation campaign led by major stakeholders of the Ottoman state *to protect and save* the state, the religion and the country from foreign occupation and disintegration. Symbols of state (still associated with the Ottoman dynasty), religion (represented by the caliphate) and ‘the fatherland’ (*vatan*) served as a common bond between the Ottoman elite and those disparate Muslim communities of the empire who, unlike their non-Muslim counterparts, had not yet constructed modern national identities in opposition to the imperial regime.

Coalition building and power consolidation

The first major success of the elite leaderships of both movements was uniting independent interest groups and popular initiatives under a central command and around a common cause. It is at this stage that Ayatollah Khomeini and Mustafa Kemal emerged as pragmatic tacticians and shrewd political strategists. In striving to build and maintain broad-based popular coalitions, both leaders propagated simple and positive agenda that were acceptable to all parties participating in the movements. These did not include, certainly not explicitly,

⁶⁰ I refer to these movements as the ‘Anatolian resistance movement of 1919 – 23’ and the ‘Iranian revolution of 1978 – 79’, because as the following pages will elaborate, the commonly used terms ‘Kemalist/Turkish nationalist movement’ and ‘the Islamic revolution’ are more reflective of the post-victory ideologies and political arrangements of the Turkish and IRI republics than the movements’ diverse composition and articulated goals at the time of mobilisation. When I do refer to the ‘Kemalist revolution’ or ‘Islamic revolution’ it is in the context of post-victory politics of the two republics.

the radical socio-political reform projects that the leaders would initiate once they came to power.

Hence, the periods before and after victory stand in stark contrast with each other: if the popular movements were in essence participatory, relatively egalitarian and inclusive on the basis of shared interests, post-victory years were defined by vicious power struggles and schisms based on clashing interests and visions, resulting in a more exclusive and homogenous political space, ultimately dominated by the charismatic leaders and their loyal disciples. It was in this process of making and tearing apart coalitions that the new guardians, the 'people' and the 'enemies' of the Khomeinist and Kemalist regimes took their shape.

Pragmatic coalition building

Khomeini first publicised his theory of *velayat-e faqih* (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist) in a series of lectures in 1971 while in exile in the Iraqi city of Najaf. During these lectures, which were later compiled under the title of *Hokumat-e Islami* (Islamic Government), he declared Islam to be incompatible with monarchy and argued that "in order to attain the unity and freedom of the Muslim peoples, we must overthrow the oppressive governments installed by the imperialists and bring into existence an Islamic government of justice that will be in the service of the people."⁶¹ Only under the guidance of the wisest and the most learned Islamic scholars (*fuqaha*) could such a just government be established and maintained.

Although *Hokumat-e Islami* would serve as the blueprint of the system of guardianship that Khomeini established after 1979, his early formulation of the concept, particularly the precise institutional character and socio-political role of guardianship, was vague and theoretical. In the years leading to the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime, Khomeini and his disciples carefully downplayed the divisive doctrinal issues surrounding *velayat-e faqih*, and instead emphasised the anti-

⁶¹ "Islam proclaims monarchy and hereditary succession wrong and invalid. When Islam first appeared in Iran, the Byzantine Empire, Egypt, and the Yemen, the entire institution of monarchy was abolished." (Khomeini 1971)

monarchical, anti-imperialist, revolutionary and justice-seeking aspects of 'Islamic governance'.⁶² Ultimately, it was his unflinching opposition both to Pahlavi authoritarianism and to its military, financial and political sponsors in the West that had transformed the aging cleric into an icon of resistance for many Iranians – not the relatively obscure theory he put forth a decade previously (and was criticised heavily for by the leading Shi'a clerics of the time).⁶³

During the 1970s, Khomeini generally confined his statements regarding the Islamic character of the political system he envisioned to the “need for the clergy to play a supervisory role” to government. Only in the last stage of his exile in Paris in 1978, did he start speaking about an 'Islamic republic' (*jomhoori-ye Islami*) rather than an Islamic government. This was in part an effort to appeal to the various opposition groups that were “against the Shah and [...] not content with just reforming the monarchy” and also to paint a favourable picture of his movement in the western public opinion (Shakibi 2010: 90). In the popular revolutionary slogan of 'liberty, freedom, Islamic republic' (*esteqlal, azadi, jomhoori-ye Islami*) the idea of Islamic government was paired with the yearning for a republican system that had its roots in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905 – 06. Even at this late stage, however, Khomeini's descriptions of what an 'Islamic Republic' would look like remained ambiguous. In an interview with *Le Monde*, dated 13 November 1978, he said:

By “republic” it is meant the same types of republicanism as they are at work in other countries. However, this republic is based on a constitution which is Islamic. The reason we call it the Islamic Republic is that all conditions for the candidates as well as rules, are based on Islam [...] The regime will be a republic just like anywhere else.

While in Paris, Khomeini and his entourage often stressed that the future government of Iran would respect the rights of minorities, the rights of women,

⁶² This point remains contested. Abrahamian (1993: 30) notes, “some of [Khomeini's] lay allies later complained that this avoidance had been part of a devious clerical scheme to dupe the public. Khomeini's disciples countered that it was the liberals and leftists who had conspired to suppress the book *Velayat-e Faqih*.”

⁶³ Grand Ayatollah Kho'i, the leading Shi'a *marja-e taqlid* ('object of emulation'; the highest position of leadership in the Shi'a *ulama*) of his time, was among numerous senior critics of Khomeini's thesis.

and basic principles of democracy. “Islamic Republic will be founded on the freedom of expression and combat against all kinds of censorship”, Khomeini said.⁶⁴ He argued that “an Islamic Republic is a democratic state in the true sense of the word [...] the Islamic state will respond with logic to all arguments put forward” (Moin 2010: 219). There were also references to ‘progressive Islam’ where it would even be possible for a woman to become president (*Ibid*: 195).

This was a period during which the leader was surrounded by liberal-minded or left-leaning Islamist political activists and intellectuals, such as Ebrahim Yazdi, Abol Hassan Bani Sadr and Sadeq Qotbzadeh, who served as the link between the secular and religious wings of the revolutionary movement, as well as between the movement and the outside world. Sorbonne-educated Bani Sadr also advocated an Islamic republic, but one which opposed clerical involvement in politics and guaranteed the individual rights of citizens (Bani Sadr 1981). MIT-educated Yazdi, who maintained the movement’s relationship with Iranian student activists abroad, and Qotbzadeh, Khomeini’s spokesperson while in France, had set up the international branch of the Freedom Movement of Iran, a revolutionary Islamist pro-democracy movement, founded, among others, by Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleqani and former Mosaddeqist Mehdi Bazargan.

During this time, Khomeini met with representatives of secular leftist Iranian groups, who attended “his evening consultations, and came away with the feeling that there would be room for them, too, in the Iran he was fighting for” (Benard and Khalilzad 1984: 39). A unity of purpose brought militant groups with wide-ranging agenda like the People’s Mojahedin of Iran (*Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran*, MEK), which espoused a Marxist interpretation of Shi’ism, the communist People’s Feda’iyan Organisation (*Sazmen-e Feda’iyan-e Khalq*), and the right wing anti-Bahai *Hojjatieh* Society under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. His rainbow coalition, which included members of the Shi’a clergy, the *bazaar* merchants, students, teachers, workers, peasants, women, liberal and leftist intellectuals, radical and moderate Islamists, communists and constitutionalists, was held together by two basic objectives: the removal of the Pahlavi regime and the establishment of a free, independent and just political system. While the first objective was uncontroversial to all and the most urgent,

⁶⁴ Interview, *Reuters*, 26 October 1978

defining and establishing a government that was 'free, independent and just' would prove lethally divisive.

Mustafa Kemal, too, offered a seemingly straight-forward set of objectives to the disparate groups that united under his command in the Anatolian resistance movement: the liberation of the fatherland from foreign occupation, the restoration of the state's sovereignty and the Muslim nation's independence. The territorial boundaries of 'the fatherland' were determined on the basis of a set of decisions adopted by the last Ottoman parliament and endorsed in the formative congresses of the movement in Erzurum and Sivas in 1919 and 1920.⁶⁵ With the exception of the Ottoman province of Kirkuk, these correspond to the present-day borders of the Turkish Republic. The pre- and post-victory notions of 'state' and 'nation', on the other hand, exhibit striking contrasts. If Khomeini was ambiguous about his post-revolutionary plans for Iran, Mustafa Kemal was almost completely silent. Until military victory was achieved and his charismatic authority firmly established, he did not publicise any plans to establish a republic or to impose radical westernising and secularising reforms.

The Anatolian resistance movement was a religiously defined project, whose leaders professed no overt desire for regime change until after its initial objectives were achieved. During the coalition-building stage, Mustafa Kemal frequently referred to the "liberation of the sacred office of the caliphate" as one of the main goals of the resistance (Atay 2009: 245, 321). In his memoirs, General Kazım Karabekir, who was later attacked by the Kemalists as a traditionalist, expressed his disapproval of the heavily religious symbolism used in the opening ceremony of the GNA in Ankara on 23 April 1920.⁶⁶ Mustafa Kemal's own speeches during this early period frequently emphasised and glorified Islam as a bond that united people. Likewise, his early references to the 'nation' (*millet*) corresponded to an ethnically and culturally diverse religious community in the original meaning of the term in the Ottoman administrative lexicon, and not to the modern western idea of a homogenous society built upon

⁶⁵ The 'National Pact' (*Misak-ı Milli*) laid claim to those parts of the empire with a majority Muslim population, excluding Arab provinces, but including the Kurdish provinces of Anatolia and northern Iraq. With the exception of the Ottoman province of Kirkuk, this corresponds largely to the current borders of the Turkish Republic.

⁶⁶ "Never in our history has an assembly been inaugurated with such a deeply fanatical religious ceremony." (Karabekir 2008: 735)

a reconstructed history, culture and language. In a speech to the GNA on 1 May 1920, Mustafa Kemal recognised this unity in diversity:

The people who constitute this great Assembly of ours are not only Turks, not only Circassians, not only Kurds, not only the Laz, but the community of Muslims that comprises them all. [...] Thus, the nation that we endeavour to preserve and defend naturally does not consist of a single component. It consists of diverse components of Islam. They are compatriots who have mutual respect for each other, and [...] will always respect each other's ethnic, social and geographic rights. (Arsan 1989a: 74 – 75)

The movement's leaders stressed this historic Islamic unity particularly in their effort to win the support of Kurdish notables. Kurds were given the prospect of a separate homeland in Sèvres, and for this purpose a delegation of Kurdish leaders had participated in the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. In his correspondences with Kurdish tribal leaders, Mustafa Kemal often emphasised the brotherly and religious bond between the Turks and the Kurds, as well as the long-standing service of the Kurds to the Ottoman state.⁶⁷ In a telegraph to the notables of Malatya province, who had agreed to support the resistance, he wrote:

It is without a doubt that as long as we have religious and noble grandees like you, the Turk and the Kurd will continue to live as inseparable brothers and as one unshakable body will form an iron fortification around the caliphate against our internal and external enemies. (Akyol 2008: 164)

Finally, this language was imbued with anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist rhetoric, even though the movement's leaders did not profess a class-conscious ideology. Nonetheless on the eve of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, and when socialist movements were energised in Europe, the defiant slogans of revolutionary socialism held certain appeal for the inheritors of a defunct empire now resisting the great imperial powers of the West. The revolution in Russia had been a welcome development for the Ottomans during World War I, as Lenin

⁶⁷ For the official correspondence between Ankara and the Kurdish notables during the resistance movement, see Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi (1991: 105, 149).

denounced the tsarist government's territorial claims and withdrew Russia out of the war. For the Anatolian movement, it also presented a practical opportunity. Days after the inauguration of the GNA, Mustafa Kemal wrote to Lenin for financial and military assistance as part of a 'joint struggle against imperialism' (Dmytryshyn 1987). In an effort to appease the Bolsheviks, who were sceptical of Mustafa Kemal's revolutionary credentials, the Turkish leader allowed a group of leftist Ottoman intellectuals to establish an official Communist Party in Anatolia (Tunçay 2009). A declaration adopted in November 1920, while a GNA delegation prepared to visit Moscow, summarised the anti-imperialist, religious and pro-state goals of the resistance movement with the following words:

The Turkish Grand National Assembly has been established with a pledge to safeguard life and independence within national borders and rescue the offices of the caliphate and the sultanate. Consequently it is firm in its belief that it will succeed in liberating the people of Turkey, whose life and independence it considers its sole and sacred purpose, from the tyranny and oppression of imperialism and capitalism, and make it the master of its own will and sovereignty.⁶⁸

Based on these promises, Mustafa Kemal assumed the leadership of a popular Muslim resistance movement that brought together westernised Ottoman bureaucrats and former Unionist officers, an emerging Muslim middle class and intelligentsia with royalist, liberal, nationalist or leftist political dispositions, as well as provincial notables and tribal leaders of various ethnic and geographic backgrounds, united in defence of the fatherland, the state and the religion.

⁶⁸ Minutes of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Year 1, Meeting 99, 18 November 1920, p. 414, <http://global.tbmm.gov.tr/index.php/EN/yd/icerik/43>.

Consolidation of power

As is the case with many heterogeneous popular movements, the coalitions led by the two leaders fractured soon after fulfilling their primary goal. Whether by pre-meditated design or in spontaneous reaction to the ensuing period of political chaos, uncertainty and openness, Ayatollah Khomeini and Mustafa Kemal emerged as ruthless consolidators of power and pressed on with implementing their radical socio-political agendas. In Iran, the purges of the Pahlavi-era elite went underway immediately after the fall of the dynasty and continued in a violent manner for several years.⁶⁹ Next, Khomeini turned against secular, nationalist and leftist groups and moderate Islamists that had lent various degrees of support to the revolution but objected in part or in full to the unfolding political domination of the clergy.

Khomeini set out to establish a constitution and system that would serve as the mechanism to transform the Iranian society into the ideal Islamic community. In 1980, he announced the beginning of a 'Cultural Revolution' aimed at cleansing the Iranian society of un-Islamic (thus impure) elements such as secularism, westernism, imperialism, capitalism and communism. Growing impatient with the rising secular opposition to this single-minded pursuit of his revolutionary vision, he branded his critics "xenomaniacs, people infuriated with the West, empty people with no content", questioning their loyalty to the revolution and ability to grasp its urgent needs and the truth embodied in Islam.⁷⁰ Shortly before ordering the closure of 22 opposition newspapers, Khomeini stated:

If we had been truly revolutionary we would never have allowed them [the opposition parties] to be established. We should have established one party, the party of the oppressed [...] I will warn these corrupt groups all over the country that if they do not stop we will deal with them differently [...] It is the duty of the revolutionary court to ban all these newspapers and magazines which do not reflect the

⁶⁹ At the beginning of the Iran – Iraq war, the manpower in the Iranian military had fallen from about 240,000 to 180,000 as a result of purges and desertions. The list of purges at the time included 250 generals. "War in the Persian Gulf", *Time*, 6 October 1980.

⁷⁰ From the speech marking the anniversary of the 15 Khordad uprising, 5 June 1979. (Khomeini 2002: 270)

path of the nation and to arrest their writers and put them on trial.⁷¹

The fate of the liberal Islamist intellectuals who surrounded the leader during his final months in exile portrays the brutal course that the revolution took in its foundational years. Within a few years all of the men who served in influential positions in the immediate aftermath of the revolution were ousted, marginalised or eliminated: Bazargan, Taleqani, Bani Sadr and Yazdi were members of the Revolutionary Council (*Shura-ye Enghelab*) that Khomeini set up shortly before returning to Iran (which also included leading revolutionary clerics like Hashemi Rafsanjani, Ali Khamenei, Ayatollahs Beheshti and Motahhari). Bazargan became the prime minister of the provisional government, and Yazdi served as his deputy and minister of foreign affairs. Both men resigned in November 1979 in protest over the provisional government's inability to control the arbitrary justice dished out against the regime's opponents by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Khomeinist vigilante groups, and the creation of an *ulama*-dominated Assembly of Experts instead of a pluralistic and non-clerical constituent assembly to draft the constitution. The first elected president of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), Bani Sadr clashed with Khomeini over the role of the clergy in government and the radicalisation of the revolution. Having been branded a liberal and an imperialist lackey by the left and the Khomeinists, he was impeached and fled the country in June 1981. Finally, in 1982, Qotbzadeh was accused of plotting to assassinate Khomeini and executed.

The split between the Khomeinists and the leftist groups (both secular and Islamic) that the leader branded as 'hypocrites' (*monafeqin*) was more violent. Between 1979 and 1981, tensions between the People's Mojahedin and the Khomeinists transformed from street battles into a bloody struggle for the reins of the regime. Khomeini blamed the MEK for collaborating with foreign intelligence agencies. Following a bomb attack at the headquarters of the ruling Islamic Republic Party (*Hezb-e Jomhoori-ye Islami*, IRP) in June 1981, which killed more than 70 high-ranking officials, the regime resorted to mass execution of all those perceived as real or potential opponents to the leader's authority. "In

⁷¹ Speech, 17 August 1979. Quoted in Rajaei (1983: 100).

six short weeks,” wrote Abrahamian, “the Islamic Republic shot over one thousand prisoners. The victims included not only members of the MEK but also royalists, Bahais, Jews, Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, Qashqayis, Turkomans, National Frontists, Maoists, anti-Stalinist Marxists, and even apolitical teenage girls who happened to be in the wrong street at the wrong time” (Abrahamian 1993: 131). The *Tudeh* Party, which continued to back Khomeini until as late as 1983, was accused of spying for the Soviet Union and destroyed almost overnight when it opposed Khomeini’s decision to continue the war with Iraq (Moin 2000: 255). *Tudeh*’s fate was shared by the members of *Feda’iyan-e Khalq*, which too supported Khomeini until 1983.

The period of power consolidation also saw the forced marginalisation of right-wing and religious interest groups, such as the anti-Bahai *Hojjatieh* Society which was disbanded in 1983, as well as powerful clerics who were critical of the institutionalisation of *velayat-e faqih* and the politicisation of the clergy. Chief among these dissident clerics was Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Kazem Shariatmadari of Tabriz. Throughout 1979, Shariatmadari’s mainly Azeri supporters clashed with pro-Khomeini factions. By early 1980, his supporters were suppressed, the political party he was associated with (Muslim People’s Republican Party) accused of being infiltrated by ‘anti-Islamic foreign agents’ and disbanded, and Shariatmadari himself was put under house arrest (Moin 2000: 230). In 1982, the aged cleric was accused of conspiring with Qotbzadeh to assassinate the leader, and in an unprecedented move that shook the clerical establishment to its core, Khomeini had this pre-eminent Shi’a scholar defrocked. His message to the clergy was that the revolution was more important than tradition.

Finally, the leader was no more lenient towards those within his closest circle of followers, who dared to publicly criticise the basic policies of the Islamic Republic, as evidenced in the case of Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri. A firm believer in *velayat-e faqih* and a dedicated disciple of Khomeini since the early 1960s, whom the charismatic leader had referred to as “the fruit of my life’s labour”, Montazeri was the designated successor to the leader until he was dismissed in 1989 for speaking out against the course of the revolution in the

midst of a final round of mass executions following the end of the Iraq war.⁷² Condemning the executions, Montazeri publicly argued that the Islamic government had taken a path in the wrong direction and betrayed the revolution's core "values and principles".⁷³ In a message commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Islamic revolution, he called for greater political openness, foreign trade, and popular participation in government. "The people of the world," he said, "thought our only task here in Iran was to kill".⁷⁴ Overnight, he was demoted from his position as the leader's heir-designate, had his clerical title and portraits across the country removed, and was forced into political obscurity in virtual house arrest in Qom.

In tightening their grip over politics and society and crushing various forms of opposition, which, in addition to those discussed above, also included numerous armed uprisings by ethnic minorities across the country demanding greater political and cultural rights, the Khomeinists made use of two basic tools of coercion that supplemented Ayatollah Khomeini's unmatched charisma and prestige: armed militia groups and organisations loyal to the leader went on to form the backbone of the regime's security establishment. These included the Islamic revolutionary committees (*Komiteh*), the *Hezbollahi* vigilantes, and the Revolutionary Guards. Secondly, the Revolutionary Courts (*Dadgahha-ye Enqelab*) oversaw the incarceration and execution of thousands of perceived 'enemies of Islam and the revolution'.

The authority of the Kemalist regime too was established by means of coercive measures, namely through the 'Independence Tribunals' (*İstiklal Mahkemeleri*) and the military. As the unifying rhetoric Mustafa Kemal used during the resistance movement gradually gave way to a project of systematic socio-political and cultural transformation, resistance to his increasingly authoritarian personal rule intensified. As in the Iranian case, dissent came in many different forms and directions. Among those who were purged,

⁷² The split between Montazeri and other prominent Khomeinists, particularly Hashemi Rafsanjani, dates back to the Iran-Contra Affair of 1986 (Keddie and Richard 2003: 260). For the 1987 - 88 mass executions see Amnesty International (1990).

⁷³ In an August 1988 letter to Khomeini, Montazeri wrote, "These mass executions [...] violate the fundamental principles of Islam, of the Holy Prophet, and of our Imam Ali." (Abrahamian 1999: 209)

⁷⁴ *Tehran Times*, 11 February 1989

marginalised or suppressed by the Kemalists were Ottoman loyalists, liberals, socialists, Unionist officers, conservative Muslims, Kurds, as well as fellow nationalist leaders of the resistance movement who fell out with the leader for political or ideological reasons.

Initially set up to maintain order and discipline and prevent desertions from the army during the resistance movement, the Independence Tribunals were equipped with extraordinary legal powers. They gradually became a vehicle to suppress opposition and consolidate power in the hands of the Kemalists. Socialists were among the first to be discarded: three months after being founded on the orders of Mustafa Kemal, the Turkish Communist Party was shut down in January 1921. Socialist deputies in the GNA and several members of the Communist Party were tried and found guilty of treason, and a number of leftist newspapers were closed down. Seventeen leading independent Turkish communists were rounded up and thrown to their deaths off a fishing boat off the Black Sea coast (Tunçay 2009: 252 – 253).

Mustafa Kemal personally vetted all candidates standing for the second GNA elections in April 1923, barring standing deputies that were deemed Islamist, Kurdish nationalist, communist, or simply too independent. This included an entire opposition bloc, known as the 'Second Group', which had resisted the concentration of political power in the hands of one man and his increasingly tightknit entourage (Demirel 1993; Koçak 1998). As a result, the impressive diversity of social, professional and political backgrounds reflecting the combined will of the Anatolian resistance movement in the First Assembly gave way to the much more homogenous Second Assembly that was dominated by loyal followers of the leader, organised under a new ruling party: the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP). It was this Second Assembly that declared Turkey a republic and Mustafa Kemal its president, abolished the caliphate and implemented strict social reforms such as the banning of Islamic sects and orders and the imposition of western-style dress code.

When the reforms sparked protests and uprisings, the military and the Independence Tribunals were dispatched "to all four corners of the land [...] to suppress the 'reactionaries' by means of terror" (Tunçay 1989: 77). One such

revolt against the central government in 1925 by the Sunni Kurdish tribes of Eastern Anatolia, led by Sheikh Said, gave the Kemalists the pretext to declare nationwide emergency laws to decisively quash all types of opposition to what had now become 'the Kemalist revolution'. Tens of local and national newspapers were ordered closed, having been branded by Recep Peker, a prominent Kemalist and sympathiser of European fascism, as "poisonous dens of snakes" (Topuz 1996). Also shut down by the law was the only opposition party at the GNA at the time, the Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*, PRP) established by prominent leaders of the resistance movement, such as Rauf Orbay, Kazım Karabekir, Refet Bele and Ali Fuat Cebesoy. Mustafa Kemal described the PRP in his 'Great Speech' (*Nutuk*) as "the product of most treacherous minds". "This party," the leader declared, "has harboured and supported murderers and reactionaries; assisted the plans of foreign enemies who wish to destroy the Turkish state, the young Turkish Republic" (Atatürk 1995).⁷⁵

In fact, the PRP leaders' predicament may be comparable to that of Bani Sadr, Shariatmadari or even Montazeri in Iran: their opposition was chiefly against what they saw as the monopolisation of power in the hands of a single man and his limited entourage, and the radical and authoritarian nature of the Kemalist reforms. This won them the popular backing of a diverse range of socio-political groups, both within and outside the regime.⁷⁶ "The PRP," explains Zürcher, "was not an organisation of outside opposition to the policies of the nationalists":

The party had a real political programme and ideological stance, but it was not, as has been said so often, a reactionary or religious one. Its programme was a moderately liberal one with a distinct Western European flavour [...] less centralising, authoritarian, nationalist and

⁷⁵ The 'Great Speech' was delivered at the Grand National Assembly between 15 – 20 October 1927 and consists of Mustafa Kemal's own version of the events from the end of World War I to the Anatolian movement and the early years of the Turkish Republic. For decades it was considered the official history of the republic and was a part of the national education curricula.

⁷⁶ According to Zürcher, "we do not have definitive analysis of the popular support of the PRP, which has been variously described as Unionists, religious reactionaries, supporters of the Second Group, democrats, conservatives, cosmopolitans, the press and sectors of the armed forces." (1991: 113, footnote 3)

radical [than the ruling Republican People's Party].
(1991:114)

A final round of purges took place after a plot to assassinate Mustafa Kemal in Izmir was foiled in June 1926. The ensuing trial was used as an opportunity to deal with political rivals, including former leaders of the disbanded PRP and prominent former Unionist officers, who had supported Mustafa Kemal during the resistance movement. While the PRP leaders, who still commanded prestige and loyalty within the military, were acquitted (albeit marginalised from public life), the Unionists were executed. "Sadly," wrote Atay in his memoir, "the regime held on to power on the execution tables of Izmir and Ankara. This definitive elimination discouraged all types of opposition and reaction. It allowed Mustafa Kemal to complete the revolution he had started." (2009: 470)

Indeed, within four years of establishing the Turkish and Iranian republics, Mustafa Kemal by 1927 and Ayatollah Khomeini by 1983 had effectively dealt with the major domestic challenges to their charismatic authority and established themselves at the top of a mighty central state apparatus inherited from the monarchical predecessors they had toppled. During this power struggle, both men relied on a small but fiercely loyal team of followers, who subscribed and contributed to their leaders' vision and occupied the top administrative posts in the young republics. The Kemalist and Khomeinist projects were overseen by these core teams of dedicated operatives, many of whom owed their political careers to the leader. They were aided by the leaders' unmatched charisma, prestige and supra-political position, their growing monopoly over the state's coercive institutions and the judiciary, and finally, a sustained state of national emergency on the pretext of continuous domestic and foreign threats to the regime. This last one allowed the young regimes to securitise the political sphere, frame open criticism of their policies in the dichotomous language of revolution and counter-revolution, patriotism and treason, and suppress dissent in a heavy-handed and often arbitrary manner.

The process of making and breaking coalitions ultimately created layers of entrenched opposition within and towards the new regimes and potential challengers to the hegemonic ideologies they imposed. Resistance to the

Kemalist and Khomeinist projects – particularly from various groups that had participated in the popular movements and felt betrayed in its aftermath – continued in various forms and intensity during and beyond the lifetime of the charismatic leaders. It also made the Kemalist and Khomeinist elites inherently suspicious of popular dynamics in society and insecure in their positions of power. At different periods over the following decades, the Kemalist elite viewed Kurds, political Islamists, traditional conservatives, socialists, communists and liberal democrats as potential threats to the regime. Communists, social democrats and liberals (secular or Islamic) that remained outside the core Khomeinist political elite, ethnic and religious minorities, nationalists of different backgrounds, as well as the Iranian diaspora as a whole have been depicted in a similar light by the Islamic Republic. The systems of guardianship that the Kemalists and Khomeinists established to protect the resultant power balance were therefore not only products of a pre-determined ideological blueprint, but also the natural outcome of these foundational experiences and elite worldviews that were shaped in the process.

Kemalism and Khomeinism: Ideological foundations of the hybrid regimes

The ideological frameworks that the founding fathers of the Turkish and Iranian republics promoted embodied many internal ambiguities and contradictions (some intentional, others perhaps unavoidable), which allowed them to be interpreted selectively by their successors. Nonetheless, it is possible to pinpoint a number of basic characteristics that Kemalism and Khomeinism seem to converge and diverge on. Essentially, both men were preoccupied with achieving sovereignty and modernity by re-engineering society on the basis of their strictly Manichean worldviews. The state, as in any revolutionary polity, became the central mechanism to carry out these social engineering projects. Where they diverged most notably was on their views of the international order and the scope of their revolution.

Sovereignty

The gradual loss of sovereignty and the sense of ‘marginalisation’ weighed heavily in both Mustafa Kemal’s and Khomeini’s thinking and reflected the intense distress felt within Iranian and Ottoman societies resulting from the polities’ cultural, economic and political decline and subjugation by foreign imperial powers. The popular slogans of the Anatolian resistance movement and the Iranian revolution – ‘Independence or death!’ (*Ya istiklal ya ölüm!*) and ‘Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic’ (*Esteqlal, azadi, jomhooriye Islami*) – captured these sentiments.

“If a state,” argued Mustafa Kemal, “cannot practice its right to try foreigners in its own courts, if a nation is prohibited from taxing foreigners the same way it taxes its own people, if a state is prohibited from taking measures against internal elements that corrode its very being, can we believe such a state is independent and sovereign?”⁷⁷ In the same vein, Ayatollah Khomeini protested the extension of legal immunity to Americans inside Iran in 1964, which he called “a shattering blow to the foundations of our national independence”.⁷⁸ In a famous speech that helped transform him into a champion of Iran’s national rights, Khomeini said:

If some American servant, some American cook, assassinates your *marja* in the middle of the bazaar, or runs over him, the Iranian police do not have the right to apprehend him! Iranian courts do not have the right to judge him! [...]The government has sold our independence, reduced us to the level of a colony, and made the Muslim nation of Iran appear more backward than the savages in the eyes of the world!⁷⁹

The charismatic authority of Mustafa Kemal and Ayatollah Khomeini and the legitimacy of the republics they founded very much rest on the popular recognition that it was these leaders who finally righted a long-standing wrong, ended the injustice being done upon their nation and corrected their inferior

⁷⁷ Speech delivered at the Izmir Economic Congress, 17 February 1923, quoted in Akalın (2008: 26).

⁷⁸ Open letter to Prime Minister Hoveyda, Najaf, 16 April 1967. (Khomeini 2002: 189)

⁷⁹ Speech delivered in Qom, 27 October 1964. (*Ibid*: 181 – 182)

status vis-à-vis the West. This is also the basis on which the guardians of the Kemalist and Khomeinist regimes have come to justify their privileged socio-political status in the two countries. “Whereas Khomeini,” writes Abrahamian, “used holy texts to support the clergy’s right to rule, the Islamic Republic claims the same right on the grounds that the clergy have valiantly saved the country from imperialism, feudalism, and despotism. This is legitimacy based not so much on divine right as on the secular function of preserving national independence.” (1993: 92). The same goes for Mustafa Kemal and the military, which is credited for saving the state and the country from imperialism, foreign occupation, and the ‘debilitating backwardness’ of tradition.

Achieving and maintaining independence necessitated not only confronting foreign powers directly but also defeating their domestic extensions. In *Hokumat-e Islami*, Khomeini (1971) claimed that “foreigners through their propaganda and their agents” inside Iran aim to “alienate the people from Islam [...] in the path of their materialistic ambitions.” He frequently pointed a finger at the monarchists, non-Muslims (Jews in particular), Zionists and the Baha’is for acting as the agents of foreign imperialists, thus making official a deep running popular paranoia of social and religious minorities (*Ibid*).

Like their Unionist predecessors, the Turkish republican elite viewed non-Muslim communities, with their relatively prosperous bourgeois status within the old empire, dubious loyalty to the state, their own nationalist aspirations and strong socio-economic ties with the West, as inassimilable into the new Turkish nation.⁸⁰ Achieving sovereignty necessitated creating a Muslim middle class, which would serve as the socio-economic backbone of the new nation. Already underway since the Unionist era, the ‘Turkification’ project was pursued through mass deportations and ethnic cleansing (of Armenians and Assyrians during World War I), legalised population exchanges (with Greece in 1923), discriminatory taxing (the ‘Wealth Tax’ of 1942) and state-sponsored violence (such as the Istanbul pogroms of 6 – 7 September 1955). These policies further

⁸⁰ From Atay’s memoir: “The Greeks were being uprooted and thrown out; and with them the entire economy of Izmir and Western Anatolia. [...] From small craftsmanship to trade and lucrative agriculture, the entire national economy was in the hands of the Christians” (2009: 383). “During the First World War, the Armenian tragedy took place. How sad that if it wasn’t for this tragedy, the [nationalist] movement would not have succeeded. [...] Outside the walls of Istanbul, all of Turkey became a land of pure Muslim Turkishness” (2009: 520).

marginalised the already diminished and impoverished non-Muslim communities throughout the republican era.

Once the 'corrosive internal elements' were uprooted, the new elites set out to educate and enlighten the masses on the basis of the 'objective truths' they claimed to possess either on the basis of scientific positivism (Kemalism) or neo-Platonic Shi'a mysticism (Khomeinism). The aim was to create an entirely 'new person' that the two leaders envisioned and personified. Despite attempting to achieve modernity through different routes, both campaigns were based on dualistic worldviews that divided the universe into civilised and uncivilised, and a paternalistic view of society that claimed to know what is best for the people.

Dualist worldview and paternalism

In his intellectual biography of Atatürk, historian Şükrü Hanioğlu (2012) identifies four ideological strands popular among the French and German educated Ottoman officers at the turn of the twentieth century, which also influenced Mustafa Kemal's worldview: 'scientism' combining nineteenth century German popular materialism, positivism and Darwinism; 'elitism' based on Gustave Le Bon's theories of mass psychology; a physical anthropology-based idea of 'nationalism'; and 'republicanism' inspired by Rousseau and the experience of the French Third Republic. For Mustafa Kemal a clear and absolute line divided those nations who were placed above the level of contemporary civilisation and those below it. He set the primary task of the guardians of the young republic as "elevating the national culture to the level of contemporary civilisation". He argued in a 1923 interview:

There are many countries, but a single civilisation. A nation has to participate in this only civilisation in order to progress. Turks have followed but one destination over the centuries. We have always walked from the East towards the West. We want to modernise our country. Our whole effort is to establish a modern, and therefore, western government in Turkey. What nation desires to enter civilisation but does not turn towards the West? (Arsan 1989c: 91)

‘Entering civilisation’ was a national as well as a cultural matter. A people could not be civilised unless they possessed a national consciousness and accepted the cultural precepts of the West. To this end, guided by the Kemalist dictum “Happy is he who calls himself a Turk”, the guardians of the young republic set out to mould the ethnically and culturally diverse Muslim communities of the new republic into a homogenous ‘Turkish’ national identity. Cultural westernisation was a social and political endeavour. Thus, besides adopting a secular civil code styled after the Swiss and a penal code inspired by fascist Italy, for example, the young regime also enforced a strict western dress code.⁸¹ The western Gregorian calendar was adopted in the place of the Islamic *hijri* calendar. Art, literature and music also had to be westernised, with traditional forms being expelled from the public sphere. The state radio, for example, was only allowed to play western music during the first decade of the republic. According to Atay, who was a member of the leader’s closest entourage, Mustafa Kemal “loved classical Turkish music, but believed in western music.” (2009: 476)

It was the replacement of the Arabic script with the Latin script that arguably had the most profound socio-cultural consequences. “With the alphabet revolution we are totally breaking away from the Eastern-Islamic culture,” wrote Yaşar Nabi, an early republican-era linguist, in his book *The Only Way: Atatürk’s Way*:

In order to truly establish our national culture inside the western civilisation, and move from being an *umma* to being a nation, we had to get rid of the influence of the Arab’s religious philosophy [...] Now as easy as it is for new generations to connect with the West in, say, sciences or fine arts, it has become that much harder for them to understand and digest the East. (1974: 16)

Kemalist ideologues inherited a world of dualisms from European positivism – West vs. East, science vs. religion, progress vs. backwardness, light vs. darkness – and took pains to establish that the Turks in fact belonged to the

⁸¹ Launching the ‘hat reform’ in the city Kastamonu, Mustafa Kemal said of traditional and religious attires: “Would a civilised person wear these strange clothes and become the laughing stock of the world?” (Arsan 1989b: 226).

‘civilised’ camp. In a reconstructed national history that depicted the late Ottoman *ancien régime* as corrupt and bankrupt and harked back at an imagined past of greatness and purity, ancient Turks were credited for inventing culture and writing. Atatürk himself conjured up (and later abandoned) a pseudo-theory which claimed that Turks were the founders of language (Aytürk 2004). “East,” wrote novelist Peyami Safa in an exemplary piece of Kemalist-era westernism, “is not aware of the direction where it is going and whence it is coming.”

Neither science nor criticism therefore exists in the east. So, one cannot speak of an intellectual life or even of intelligence [...] East is religious but not a philosopher. When compelled to describe objects, its mental ability stops. The metaphysics of India and the Far East are a play of words and have no value whatsoever. East always affirms things that cannot be proved. Its effect on nature is witchcraft. (1999: 88)

Safa then went on to explain how Turks in fact possessed a ‘European mind’. This was a deliberate campaign to restore pride and inspire confidence, albeit through falsification, in a people that had experienced continuous defeat and humiliation for centuries. It was also the type of mindset that Ayatollah Khomeini and nativist scholars like Ali Shariati and Jalal al-e Ahmed identified as ‘westoxification’ and deplored for perpetuating the very feeling of inferiority and humiliation that it sought to cure in the first place. When Khomeini rejected the Kemalist and Pahlavi arguments that attaining national sovereignty entailed westernisation, he was equally preoccupied with restoring the people’s pride and establishing Iranian (and Muslim) sovereignty in the eyes of the world. “As long as you do not put aside these imitations,” he argued, “you cannot be a human being and independent. If you want to be independent and have them recognize you as a nation, you must desist from imitating the West.”⁸²

The rebuttals of the Khomeinist ideologues reveal a similarly dichotomous worldview to that of the Kemalists. Ayatollah Motahhari, one of the chief ideologues of the revolution and a disciple of Ayatollah Khomeini, argued not only that philosophy had been in decline in the West since the sixth century

⁸² Message to Faiziyeh School, 8 September 1979. (Khomeini 2002: 29)

AD, but that even at its height in ancient Greece, western thought owed “the origin of its principal achievements to the East.” (Dabashi 2006: 151). For Khomeini, the West’s interpretation of human rights was bigoted, its democracy flawed and materialistic, its freedoms delusory. When adopted by Muslims, it led to a “colonialistic freedom”, which created slavery. The Iranian leader spoke of “deserting the West and finding the East”, of leaving darkness to find light and of choosing the divine path (*rah-e khoda*) over the path of tyranny (*rah-e taghut*) (2002: 27 - 30).

At the centre of Khomeini’s philosophical and political universe was the neo-Platonic idea of creating the ‘perfect man’ and the belief that with proper Islamic education human beings could be taken out of their primitive conditions and achieve ‘awareness’ (*erfan*, or gnosis). Khomeini was deeply affected by the gnostic strand in Shi’ism and Sufi mysticism, which clashed with the conformism and pragmatism of the orthodox Shi’a clergy. He was particularly influenced by medieval Sufi mystic Ibn al-Arabi’s ‘metaphysical and cosmological doctrine’ of the perfect man (*al-insan al-kamal*) and the idea of the evolution of human spirit put forth by seventeenth century Persian philosopher Mulla Sadra (Khomeini 1978: 163; Khomeini 2002: 330; Moin 2000: 274 – 276).

Hence, like the Kemalists, the Khomeinists embarked on a project to ‘enlighten the masses’ and create that ideal citizen from above – a common goal of revolutions. A Sharia-inspired legal system replaced the European-inspired civil code put in place by Reza Shah and strengthened during the White Revolution. A dress code conforming to Islamic morality was enforced. Western-style arts, literature and music – and those who practiced them – were removed from public life, if not outright banned. As part of Khomeini’s ‘Cultural Revolution’, universities were closed down for three years from 1980, during which period ‘westoxicated’ and ‘imperialist-minded’ academics and students (including supporters of left wing groups who had backed the revolution) were purged and secular curricula rewritten according to an Islamic framework.⁸³

Khomeini insisted that his project was not against ‘modernity’ but rather against the western understanding of it. Its declared aim was to create an authentically Islamic alternative to western modernity. “We are not rejecting

⁸³ Speech delivered in Tehran, 26 April 1980 (Khomeini 2002: 295 – 296).

modern science,” Khomeini declared, “nor are we saying that science exists in two varieties, one Islamic and the other non-Islamic.” (Khomeini 2002: 296). The charismatic leader often derided as old-fashioned (*kohaniperest*) and reactionary (*ertejai*) those clerics who disapproved the use of modern technology in the creation of an authentic Islamic modernity. Khomeini emphasised this point in his last will and testament:

The claim that Islam is against modern [technical] innovations is the same claim made by the deposed Mohammad Reza Pahlavi that these people [Islamic revolutionaries] want to travel with four-legged animals, and this is nothing but an idiotic accusation. For, if by manifestations of civilisation it is meant technical innovations, new products, new inventions, and advanced industrial techniques which aid in the progress of mankind, then never has Islam, or any other monotheist religion, opposed their adoption. On the contrary, Islam and the Holy Quran emphasise science and industry. (Ansari 2006: 66)

Finally, the Khomeinist project went beyond merely re-organising public life and ventured deeper into the private sphere of the citizenry than its secularising predecessors had dared or managed. The Islamic guardians dictated how people were expected to behave and socialise, what they were allowed to eat and drink, in the private as well as the public sphere.

A key feature of these re-education campaigns was the role of the republican elites as ‘guardians’ and ‘teachers’ to the masses. The clergy in Iran and the military in Turkey, aided by cadres of revolutionary youth high in ideological fervour, were expected to both guide the masses along the leader’s path and act as a role model to society. “The Turkish people love their military,” Atatürk declared, “and consider it the protector of their own ideals.” (Kocatürk 1999: 335). He described the military as “not only the guardian of the fatherland and the regime, but also [...] an education and teaching hearth in the widest and truest sense.” (Arsan 1989b: 331). One of the most controversial aspects of Khomeini’s ideology in terms of Shi’a legal tradition was its politicisation of the concept of guardianship (*velayat*), which in traditional Shi’ism was understood as the protection of minors and the needy by the clergy. “With respect to duty and position,” wrote Khomeini in *Hokumat-e Islami*, “there is indeed no

difference between the guardian of a nation and the guardian of a minor.”⁸⁴ Khomeini thus defined the correct function of the religious leaders and scholars as “to guide the people in all matters.” (2002: 341)

With his immense charisma, Ayatollah Khomeini became the guide of all guides, the ultimate guardian of the revolution; a position that became institutionalised in the 1979 Constitution under the personal office of *vali-ye faqih*, the Guardian Jurist, or Supreme Leader. In introducing his modernising reforms to the new Turkish Republic – wearing for the first time the western ‘hat’ in public, teaching the public the Latin alphabet, or organising ballroom dancing – Atatürk too was guiding ‘his people’ along the revolutionary road by example; one of his enduring epithets being *Başöğretmen*, or ‘Head Teacher’. “We need to hold the nation by the hand,” the Turkish leader said, “and finish the revolution we have started” (Kocatürk 1999: 97). Thus the paternalistic relationship inherent in the charismatic leader–follower bond was engrained in the socio-political character of the Turkish and Iranian republics. The charismatic leaders assumed the role of benevolent patriarchs – similar to the Ottoman and Pahlavi monarchs they came to supplant – whom the people loved and embraced.

While this elitist view of society would seem to clash with the populist dictums of the two republics, arguably the two reinforced each other. Much like other populisms, Khomeinism “elevated its leader into a demigod towering above the people and embodying their historical roots, future destiny, and revolutionary martyrs. Despite all the talk about the people, power emanated down from the leader, not up from the masses” (Abrahamian 1993: 38). Furthermore, by associating ‘the people’ with the charismatic leader through a supposedly unbreakable paternalistic bond, the Kemalist and Khomeinist guardians not only sought to claim popular legitimacy, but also defined who would be included and excluded among the people: opponents of the regime, critics of the leader and his reforms, and those who resisted or deviated from the leaders’ path could not represent the will of the people. It was the task of the guardians to protect ‘the people’ and the regime against the ‘enemies of the people’.

⁸⁴ See “The Necessity for Islamic Government” in Khomeini (1971).

State and religion

Like in all revolutionary polities, the state played a central role in the Kemalist and Khomeinist projects of socio-political engineering. Both Atatürk and Khomeini saw the existence of a powerful and all-encompassing central state apparatus, controlled by the charismatic leader and his loyal followers, as vital for the manufacture of their ideal citizens and the preservation of Kemalism and Khomeinism as hegemonic ideologies. Initially perceived as a means to reach a higher ideological end, however, controlling the state soon became an end in itself, as the Kemalist and Khomeinist elites faced continuous political opposition and resistance from various societal forces and grew increasingly disillusioned with their ability to create the utopian society they had envisioned. With gradually rising apathy towards revolutionary idealism and an underlying feeling of regime insecurity, Kemalists and Khomeinists upheld the state as a symbol of authority, power and the conservation of the status quo. State veneration, imbued with a leadership cult, became the defining feature of both regimes.

Mustafa Kemal's secularisation programme did not alter the basic nature of the state's control over religion, but rather accelerated a process that had started with the nineteenth century Ottoman reforms. By closing down and banning religious orders, which under the Ottoman Empire had enjoyed a degree of autonomy despite being nominally bound to the sultan, the Kemalist regime reaffirmed the state's theoretical authority and strengthened its actual grip on power. Meanwhile, the position of the Sunni clergy did not fundamentally change: they were by and large subordinate to the Ottoman government; they remained by and large subordinate to the Kemalist government. Nor did the reforms make the state equidistant to all religions. Founded in 1924, the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) continued to serve the interests and promote the teachings of the Hanefi school of Sunni Islam.

Far from a separation of religion and politics, in other words, Kemalist secularism came to represent tightening state control over religion. Regardless of the pressures on it, Sunni Islam remained the unofficial religion of the 'secular' Turkish state and the building block of Turkish nationalism. This was a

confirmation of the state's patriarchal relationship with society, as well as a manifestation of the changing attitudes within the state towards religion, parallel to the evolving profile of those in positions of power. Severely pushed out of the public sphere in the 1930s and 40s, religion was elevated to a position of greater prominence under the *Demokrat Parti* (DP) government in the 1950s, again after the military coup of 1980, and finally, under the 'Islamist-rooted' Justice and Development Party government (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) after 2002.

It was Ayatollah Khomeini who carried out a real and profound revolution in the way state–religion relationship has been organised in Iran. Khomeini long argued, based on historical precedent and an unorthodox reading of the holy texts, that the Shi'a clergy not only could engage in political activities, but that it was obliged to do so. "Islam," he declared, "is a political religion" (Khomeini 2002: 22). He claimed that the "separation of religion from politics" was imperialist propaganda subscribed to only "by the irreligious": "No one can doubt that the Imam designated the *fuqaha* (experts of Islamic jurisprudence) to exercise the functions of both government and judgeship" (Khomeini 1971). By uniting the clergy and the secular offices of the government within the framework of an Islamic Republic, the Iranian leader effectively put an end to the institutional double-headedness that had been a hallmark of Iran's socio-political arrangement for centuries. His accomplishment would have been envied by a long list of Iranian rulers whose authority was challenged and compromised by the independent-minded *ulama*, not least the last Pahlavi shah who repeatedly expressed his yearning for a more docile clergy, like in Turkey.⁸⁵

Not only did Ayatollah Khomeini unite religion and politics, but ultimately he subordinated religion to politics. For Khomeini, urgent matters of government in an Islamic state had to come before the daily necessities of religion. As early as in 1971, he derided the quietist clergy and their followers for not taking a stance against the shah and western imperialism. "Pray as much as you like," he said, "it is your oil they are after – why should they worry about your prayers?" (Khomeini 1971). In 1988, Khomeini took a leaf out of the Sunni rulebook of pragmatic politics, when he decreed that the government, given that it was an

⁸⁵ Mohammad Reza Shah: "The Iranian clergy should learn from the Sunnis who publicly remember the king at the end of each prayer and pray for him. Of our clergy the less said the better." (Moin, 2000: 84)

Islamic one, could suspend any law, including religious laws, on the grounds of public interest (*maslahat*).⁸⁶ He had introduced a novelty to Iranian politics in defiance of Shi'a tradition.

For his part, Atatürk was pushing the limits of *maslahat* when he attempted to justify tightening state controls over religion as in the public's interests. He sought clerical backing to legitimise the abolishment of the caliphate. His followers often referred to the Turkish leader as "the great reformer of Islam", while those who despised his reforms saw him as the religion's destroyer (Atay 2009: 503). Yet even some of those who were directly targeted by these reforms, including the influential Sufi order established by Sunni Kurdish cleric Said Nursi, whose followers would play a major role in dismantling the Kemalist guardianship in the 2000s, refrained from challenging the state on the basis of their own consideration of *maslahat* (Kara 2011). It was Khomeini, and not Mustafa Kemal, who decreed that "government can destroy a mosque in order to build a highway". In their patrimonial approach to society and veneration of the state, the Kemalists and the Khomeinists shared more than either group would be happy to admit.

Mission, scope and view of the global order

One theme that was central to Ayatollah Khomeini's socio-political rhetoric and dominated the IRI's interpretation of the international order, especially in its revolutionary heyday, is the antagonistic relationship between the oppressors (*mostakbaran*) and the oppressed (*mostazafan*), which was much less pronounced in the Kemalist world of dualisms. Here lies a crucial difference between the two hegemonic ideologies. Khomeini's understanding of revolution was totalistic and universalistic: it had to start in the individual's mind and spread beyond national borders, across the globe, and in particular, the Muslim world. It was revisionist in its mission and global in scope. "We must strive to export our revolution throughout the world," the Iranian leader said in 1980, "and must abandon all ideas of not doing so, for not only does Islam refuse to

⁸⁶ "The government of Islam is a primary rule having precedence over secondary rulings such as praying, fasting and performing the hajj. To preserve Islam the government can suspend any or all secondary rulings." *Kayhan-e Hava'e*, 19 January 1988, quoted in Abrahamian (2008: 163).

recognise any difference between Muslim countries, it is the champion of all oppressed people.”⁸⁷

The relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed underpinned Ayatollah Khomeini’s dichotomous view of society and the international order throughout the 1970s and much of the 1980s. This theme was largely absent from the cleric’s earlier political pronouncements until popular nativist ideologues like Ali Shariati and Marxist Islamist groups like the MEK established the intellectual link between modern anti-imperialist literature and the historical Shi’a theme of resistance to tyranny.⁸⁸ Increasingly during the 1970s, Khomeini described society as made up of a wealthy, powerful, corrupt and degenerated capitalist upper class (*tabaqeh-e bala*) and an oppressed, disenfranchised and impoverished labouring lower class (*tabaqeh-e payin*) (Abrahamian 1993: 47 – 51). Likewise, the international order was dominated by imperialist superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, which exploited the resources and corrupted the societies of Muslim countries. This view was embodied in the Islamic Republic’s foreign policy mantra ‘neither East nor West’ (*na sharq na gharb*) in the 1980s, during which time the regime expressed solidarity with and lent support to liberation movements across the world, from Palestine to South Africa, Lebanon to Afghanistan and the Philippines.⁸⁹ This was in line with the Third World revisionism that emerged in opposition to the bipolar arrangement of the Cold War and shared parallels with the populist language of the leftist, anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist movements of the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

The Kemalist revolution, in contrast, was neither revisionist nor global in its mission and scope. The Kemalists did not seek to challenge the existing international status quo, but rather to conform to the system and acquire a more

⁸⁷ New Year’s message, 21 March 1980 (Khomeini 2002: 286). We should note, however, that the revolution’s ‘Islamic’ nature and the fact that its ideological appeal has been largely limited to Shi’a groups have been paradoxical to this ‘universalistic’ message. In the words of Ehteshami (1995: 218) “it could be maintained therefore that the revolution is on its own admission exclusivist and not universalist.”

⁸⁸ It was Shariati who in the 1960s had translated Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* into Persian as *Mostazafan-e Zamin*.

⁸⁹ “I declare my support for all movements and groups that are fighting to gain liberation from the superpowers of the left and right. I declare my support for the people of Occupied Palestine and Lebanon. I vehemently condemn once more the savage occupation of Afghanistan by the aggressive plunderers of the East.” New Year’s message, 21 March 1980. (Khomeini 2002: 286)

respectable position in its pecking order. Except for one successful claim over the province of Alexandretta, which was ceded to Turkey in 1939 by French-controlled Syria, minor border skirmishes with Pahlavi Iran and a failed claim over the British-controlled oil-rich Iraqi towns of Mosul and Kirkuk, the new republic did not seek an expansionist foreign policy. Mustafa Kemal had no desire to lead a revolution without borders. As early as in 1921, he called on to the GNA to abandon any unrealistic dreams of pan-Islamism or pan-Turkism.⁹⁰ Furthermore, unlike the 'revisionist neutrality' of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the 1980s, Turkey's conformist neutrality, embodied in the Kemalist dictum 'peace at home, peace in the world' (*yurtta sulh, cihanda sulh*) was decisively non-confrontational. In 1931, Atatürk described the basic principle of the young republic's foreign policy as "a peace course that prioritises Turkey's security and is not hostile to any nation." (Kocatürk 1999: 367)

Kemalist Turkey's pragmatic conformism and Khomeinist Iran's ideological revisionism were most evident in the ways the two regimes sought to establish their national sovereignty in the international arena. The republican government in Ankara legitimised its independence through international organisations and treaties: the legal basis of its political, economic and territorial sovereignty was enshrined in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. In nationalising the economy, it chose to purchase foreign-owned enterprises and infrastructure, such as railroads, factories and postal services, rather than expropriating them without compensation, as was the case with most foreign-owned commercial interests in Iran after 1979 (Ahmad 2005: 93). Even the forced population exchange with Greece in 1923 was carried out upon a bilateral agreement based on the Lausanne Treaty.⁹¹ In contrast, the process of establishing the IRI's sovereign status took place in an environment of continuous confrontation and sustained emergency, symbolised by the hostage crisis at the US Embassy in Tehran and the war with Iraq. During this period Tehran adopted a revisionist

⁹⁰ "Gentlemen, we drew the animosity, the grudge, the hatred of the entire world upon this country and this nation because of the grand and chimerical things we said we would do but didn't. [...] Instead of provoking our enemies by chasing notions that we will not and cannot realise, let us return to our natural and legitimate boundaries. Let us know our limits. For, gentlemen, we are a nation who wants life and independence. And only for this should we sacrifice our lives." Mustafa Kemal's address to the GNA, 1 December 1921 (Arsan 1989a: 216)

⁹¹ For an in-depth social anthropological account of the population exchange see Clark (2006).

position in international platforms, with Khomeini frequently slamming intergovernmental organisations and human rights groups as propaganda tools of superpowers.

Rhetoric did not always reflect actual practice: regardless of efforts to separate western imperialism from western civilisation, the Turkish political elite still harboured deep-rooted suspicions of foreign machinations, which surfaced during the Mosul crisis with Britain in 1926 (Safa 1999: 55; Coşar 2006). The regime readily dropped its pretension to be peace-loving at home whenever it faced resistance to its forced assimilation and secularisation policies, as reflected in its crushing of the Sunni Kurdish insurrection of Sheikh Said in 1926 and the brutal suppression of an Alevi Kurdish rebellion in the province of Dersim in 1937 - 38.⁹² Kurdish rebellions continued to challenge the Turkish state's authority and nationalist ideology in the following decades.

Iran, on the other hand, did not always back its ideological stance with concrete action. Despite its resolutely anti-Israeli rhetoric, for example, Tehran did not provide any meaningful support to rejectionist Palestinian factions until after it was left out of US-sponsored peace talks in the early 1990s. It even continued to purchase arms from the Jewish state during the war with Iraq (Parsi 2007: 106 – 109). The 'imposed war' itself was a defensive campaign against the western-backed Iraqi army, at least until Khomeini rejected a truce offered by Saddam Hussein, the original belligerent, in 1982. His eventual acceptance of ceasefire in 1988, which he described as "drinking from the poisonous chalice" spelled an effective end to the IRI's policy of 'exporting the revolution.' (Hinnebusch and Ehteshami 2002: 283 – 295)

Nonetheless rhetoric did exacerbate or help ease existing geopolitical tensions. By the late 1980s, Iran had found itself largely isolated in the wider region, with Syria, Libya and South Yemen being its only allies. Efforts by successive Iranian politicians in the post-Khomeini era to steer Iranian foreign policy towards a more pragmatist and reconciliatory line were met by stern

⁹² Alevism is a heterodox belief system that is influenced by Sufism, Shiism and Anatolian folk traditions. Historically considered as heretics by the orthodox Sunni, Kurdish and Turkish Alevis have faced persecution, systematic suppression and marginalisation since Sunni orthodoxy became institutionalised within the Ottoman state in the sixteenth century. Despite the Dersim massacres, many Alevis went on to support the secular CHP during the republican era. Alevis constitute around 15 to 20% of modern Turkey's population.

institutional, ideological and political resistance both at home and abroad. In contrast, the policy of non-confrontation adopted by the Kemalist regime led the young republic to enjoy stable relations with nearly all of its neighbours during the late 1920s and 1930s. Meanwhile, its conformist approach to the international order and general western-orientation allowed future Turkish governments to justify participating in a hegemonic organisation like NATO or seek membership of the European Union, even at the expense of compromising on the country's much cherished international sovereignty.

Immortal leader: Succession and institutionalisation of charisma

Turkey and Iran were authoritarian regimes during the rule of Atatürk and Khomeini, as the two leaders' immense charisma elevated them to a position above politics and beyond the scrutiny of other revolutionary leaders and the general public. Both men preferred to stay outside the tedium of daily politics, delegating most duties to their trusted lieutenants. Yet as the ultimate authority in all matters, they were frequently asked to weigh in on political debates and arbitrate disputes between various political factions that began to take shape soon after victory was achieved. As a result, they were often forced to make decisions on a case-by-case basis, balancing between opposing factions, finding practical solutions to impasses and, in the process, constantly reshaping ideology to justify the pragmatic steps taken to respond to the everyday issues. The leaders, in other words, were overseeing the 'routinisation' and institutionalisation of their charisma, as extraordinary times gradually gave way to the demands of everyday governance (Weber 1968: 1121).

Atay wrote that Atatürk was fond of "ventilating the parliament" occasionally, meaning he would appoint and remove prime ministers and favour contesting factions interchangeably (2009: 533). Two political factions emerged within the ruling CHP in the late 1920s and 30s: statist officers and bureaucrats headed by İsmet İnönü favoured a central role for the state in social and

economic life, while the liberal free entrepreneurs preferred a smaller and more indirect socio-economic role. Led by Celal Bayar, a banker by profession, the latter group was mainly supported by the landlords and the nascent bourgeoisie (Ahmad 2005: 90 – 99). Atatürk mediated between the two groups, appointing statist İnönü as prime minister in place of a liberal predecessor at the height of the Kurdish revolt of Sheikh Said in 1925, then replacing him with Celal Bayar towards the end of his life in 1937. As the next chapter will discuss in more detail, Khomeini too found himself having to manage the increasingly bitter clashes between the Islamic left, whose representatives advocated a statist economic policy, land reform and an anti-imperialist foreign policy, and the right (conservative) faction, which represented the *ulama-bazaar* alliance that favoured free trade, private property rights, limited state intervention in economic life and the imposition of strict religiosity in social life.

Idolised while alive, the charismatic leaders were immortalised in death. Decades after their death, their piercing gaze continued to watch over the Turkish and Iranian people through portraits hung on the walls of government buildings, classrooms, private offices and grocery stores. Their faces still appear on postage stamps, paper bills and the first page of every schoolbook. Largest boulevards, biggest stadiums and most prominent airports are named after them. Every town centre and schoolyard in Turkey has a bust of Atatürk, while the murals of Khomeini adorn the façades of prominent buildings in Iranian cities. Their maxims about virtually every subject, including some that are falsely attributed to them, are inscribed on public monuments for the inspiration of all. Their mausoleums are places of pilgrimage for their dedicated followers.

Through immortalising the leaders, the Kemalist and Khomeinist regimes attempted to ensure their longevity and durability by inheriting and institutionalising their founders' charisma and legitimacy. While the transition of power from the leaders to their successors was carried out in a relatively smooth fashion – thereby proving wrong expectations that the regimes would implode once the leaders were dead – attempts by the successors to imitate their predecessors' stature proved much more difficult and ultimately less fruitful. Loyal followers of the leaders before and after victory, İsmet İnönü and Ali Khamenei had a keen instinct for power politics and considerable influence over

the political machinery of the two regimes; yet neither possessed the popularity and the charismatic aura of Atatürk and Khomeini. Nor did they boast similarly illustrious military or religious credentials, making them vulnerable to challenges from senior military officials or clerics. Finally, unlike Atatürk and Khomeini, they were considered human and fallible, and therefore open to criticism.

The death of the charismatic leaders further exacerbated underlying factional rivalries within both regimes, with political groups competing to dominate key political institutions, while claiming to be the true representatives of the leader's legacy. While the guardians declared the basic tenets of Kemalism and Khomeinism as timeless and unchangeable, the Turkish and Iranian societies and the world around them continued to change rapidly and profoundly. Consequently, different factions interpreted the leaders' words and deeds according to their own evolving worldview, emphasising certain aspects and downplaying others to justify their political stance and discredit that of their rivals.

A different Mustafa Kemal and Khomeini exists for almost every faction in the colourful political spectrum that emerged in Turkey and Iran after the leaders passed away and were placed at the top of the Turkish and Iranian republican pantheons. Some remember Mustafa Kemal as the anti-imperialist revolutionary, the ally of Lenin, who fought western imperialists in the name of the emancipation of subjugated eastern peoples. For others, he is Atatürk, the single-minded westerniser and moderniser, the saviour of Turkey from the yoke of religion and oriental backwardness. For yet others, he is the gifted statesman in the true Ottoman-Turkish tradition, who masterfully prioritised Turkey's territorial integrity and security and its economic development over ideology. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of the Islamist-rooted political movement that disassembled Kemalist guardianship in the 2000s, mostly refers to him as *ghazi*, or holy warrior – the honorific title the GNA bestowed upon Mustafa Kemal to embellish his religious legitimacy during the resistance movement – but rarely as Atatürk.

In Iran, competing factions used Khomeinism to represent a different promise of the Iranian revolution. For Khamenei and the traditional right faction

(also known as the Principalists, or *Osulgara*) Khomeinism stood for the preservation of the *velayat-e faqih* system. For Rafsanjani and the modern right (or pragmatists) it meant economic development; for Khatami and the reformists, the rule of law and the strengthening of the republican pillar; and for Ahmadinejad and the neo-conservatives (also known as the neo-principalists or neo-fundamentalists) social justice. During the mass demonstrations that followed the disputed presidential election of 2009, the protestors that chanted 'Death to the dictator, death to Khamenei' also carried portraits of Khomeini. The security forces that suppressed them were determined to protect Khomeini's legacy and Khamenei's leadership from foreign imperialists and their 'westoxicated' agents at home.

Conclusion

This chapter attempted to demonstrate that with their ruthlessly pragmatic approach to crisis management and politics, and changing rhetoric before and after victory, the leaders themselves contributed to the existence of entrenched opposition to their regimes, as well as to the proliferation of contradictory interpretations of their message within the regimes. I have also argued that despite emerging in very different socio-cultural, historical and geopolitical contexts, which contributed to their popular depiction as the ideological nemesis of each other, they also shared important similarities that help us explain the structural parallels between the secular Turkish Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Moving from this basis, the following chapter will outline and examine the institutions of the hybrid regimes as they took shape after the leaders' death: the republican institutions that embody the will of the 'people' and the institutions of Kemalist and Khomeinist guardianship designed to keep the people in their appropriate place.

CHAPTER 4

INSTITUTIONS OF THE HYBRID REGIME

Introduction

This chapter will survey the institutional architecture of the Iranian and Turkish hybrid regimes and the contradictions, dichotomies and rivalries they embody. The demise of the charismatic founding fathers exacerbated the simmering rivalry among various institutions and political factions within the Kemalist and Khomeinist establishments over claiming the monopoly right to interpret the leaders' message and the reigns to shape the socio-political fate of the two countries. With no single individual or institution fully able to inherit the leaders' charisma, underlying ideological contradictions, foundational dichotomies and political rivalries came to the fore, as post-Atatürk Turkey and post-Khomeini Iran became gradually institutionalised as hybrid regimes.

The Iranian and Turkish political systems, like their founding fathers, are products of different times and geopolitical, socio-economic and ideological contexts. Furthermore, the Kemalist regime has been institutionally hybrid since the military coup in 1960, two decades before the Khomeinist regime came into existence, and thus experienced a longer period of evolution and institutionalisation than its Iranian counterpart. These factors help explain the various institutional differences between the two regimes. However, the two regimes share one basic characteristic that is essential to this research: the dualistic structure that pits institutions of guardianship against electoral (or republican) institutions and attempts to divide sovereign power ambiguously and rather unequally between the *aristos* and the *demos*.

Institutional duality in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Popular depictions of the Iranian regime, particularly in the West, often involve a totalitarian picture where a strictly hierarchical clerical establishment enjoys near absolute authority over society and politics. This is a misinformed caricature that ignores not only the relatively decentralised and heterogeneous nature of the Shi'a clergy in Iran, but also the intricate system of checks and balances and institutionalised rivalries that render the Khomeinist regime more competitive and pluralistic than presumed. Indeed, scholars more familiar with the Iranian political system highlight the complexity of its institutional architecture. Lafer and Stein describe it as a "system with myriad overlapping centres of power" (Buchta 2000: ix). Buchta points at the "multitude of often loosely connected and fiercely competitive centers, both formal and informal" (2000: 2). Chehabi notes, "the comparativist has literally no previously developed tools for analysing [Iran's] political system" (2001: 48).

Institutional duality is the basic character of the IRI political system on which this complex and multifaceted power structure has been built. The system embodies at once the elitist and the populist characteristics of legitimate authority that have been prominent in Iranian history for centuries. It reflects both the tradition of authoritarian rule with 'divine sanction' and the struggle for democratic government on the basis of constitutionalism and rule of law since the late nineteenth century. This duality is visible in the name 'Islamic Republic', which reflects the inherent tension and ambiguity over the revolution's meaning and purpose: the pursuit of a modern Islamic utopia for society based on the interpretation of religious sources by expert clerics (*fuqaha*) versus the pursuit of constitutional government based on popular will. It is also enshrined in the Constitution of the IRI, which was put to popular vote in 1979 and amended in 1989.

The Constitution is ambiguous as to where ultimate sovereignty lies: while Article 2 defines the Islamic republican system as based on the belief in "the One God, his exclusive sovereignty and the right to legislate, and the necessity of submission to His commands", Article 6 stipulates that "the affairs of the country must be administered on the basis of public opinion expressed by

the means of elections". Article 56 combines these two sources and describes popular sovereignty as a product of divine sovereignty, rendering the former subordinate to the latter: "Absolute sovereignty over the world and man belongs to God, and it is He who has made man master of his own social destiny. No one can deprive man of this divine right, nor subordinate it to the vested interests of a particular individual or group."⁹³

The IRI political system juxtaposes Islamic revolutionary institutions (i.e. the institutions of guardianship) next to, or above, republican (i.e. popular electoral) institutions. Indeed, for nearly every major institution associated with the republican pillar there is a parallel institution of guardianship that is not only autonomous from direct and meaningful public oversight, but also exercises significant influence over republican offices and defines the limits of popular sovereignty. At the executive level, duality is represented by the offices of the elected president and *vali-ye faqih* (Guardian Jurist, also known as *Rahbar-e Moazam-e Enqelab*, or the Great Leader of the Revolution, henceforth the Leader). In the legislative, it is the Majles (Parliament) against the Guardian Council (*Shora-ye Negahban-e Qanun-e Assasi*, GC). The dichotomy of pillars is also visible at the levels of the judiciary and the security sector: the Special Court of the Clergy (*Dadgah-e Vizheh-ye Rouhaniyat*, SCC) functions separately from the regular court system, while the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (*Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enqelab-e Islami*, IRGC) constitutes a parallel armed force alongside the regular military (*Artesh*).

Supreme Leader Khamenei defines this double-headed structure as "religious democracy" (*mardomsalari dini*), the essence of which, he argues, "requires that the political system of a society should be managed through divine guidance and the will of the people. In Islam, the people are only one pillar of legitimacy, not the only pillar."⁹⁴ We should note the deliberate use of the Persian word *mardomsalari* ('rule by the people') instead of the more commonly used

⁹³ An English version of the IRI constitution is available at:

<http://www.iranchamber.com/government/laws/constitution.php>

⁹⁴ "The Supreme Leader's View of Democracy and Religious Democracy", Official website of the Supreme Leader of the IRI, 20 March 2011,

http://english.khamenei.ir//index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1435&Itemid=12

demokrasi, which is a subtle yet revealing effort to promote an authentic notion of democracy, instead of one borrowed from the West (Zibakalam 2004).

The relationship among and within various guardianship and republican institutions remains, as already noted, more complex and multi-layered than this neatly dichotomous picture would suggest at first glance. In particular, fluid and informal factional divisions and personal networks cut across both pillars of the regime (Buchta 2000; Rakel 2009). It is mostly at these informal levels that political alliances are forged and dissolved, strategies are designed and crucial decisions are made. Nonetheless, it is the formal institutional structure of the IRI, which favours the guardianship institutions over the republican pillar, that determines the playing field on which these factional rivalries play out and policy battles are fought.

Institutions of guardianship in the IRI

The Office of the Supreme Leader

The concept of *velayat-e faqih* constitutes the backbone of the guardianship structure of the IRI. The existence of a clerical leadership office at the apex of the political establishment was enshrined in the Article 5 of the 1979 Constitution, which called for a just and pious *faqih* (expert of Islamic law) “who is fully aware of the circumstances of his age; courageous, resourceful, and possessed of administrative ability” to assume the responsibilities of the Hidden Imam, until the latter’s reappearance. The criteria for being chosen *vali-ye faqih* changed significantly following Khomeini’s death. The 1979 Constitution originally stipulated that the Leader had to be a *marja* (a grand ayatollah) as well as a revolutionary leader recognised and supported by the majority of the people. This was, in reality, a role tailored for the person of Khomeini. Until 1988 the only viable candidate to fulfil the necessary requirements was considered to be Ayatollah Montazeri, Khomeini’s disciple and designated successor. Montazeri’s public falling out with Khomeini and his subsequent marginalisation

necessitated a revision in the selection criteria in order to avoid a succession crisis.

The constitutional referendum in July 1989 saw articles 5 and 109 amended and removed the requirement for the leader to be a *marja*, thus opening the way for the rise of Khamenei, then a mid-ranking cleric, to the post. The changes emphasised political acumen over piety and popularity over scholarship. Although a pragmatic move to ensure the smooth transition of power, the new arrangement undermined the undisputed political and religious authority of *vali-ye faqih* (Ehteshami 1995: 38 – 9; Moin 2000: 294; Shakibi 2010: 122). In an attempt to make up for this loss of authority, the 1989 changes articulated the powers of the Leader for the first time and also significantly expanded them. While Khomeini's powers were unwritten and based on his tremendous charisma, Khamenei's authority had to be constitutionally protected. Article 110 outlined these powers as determining the general policies of the Islamic Republic, assuming the supreme command of the armed forces, approving the outcome of elections, dismissing the president, appointing and dismissing the head of the judiciary, the clerical members of the Guardian Council, the head of the radio and television network, and the senior commanders of the security sector.

The constitutional changes confirmed the dominant position of the Leader within the IRI political structure, moving it further away from a supra-political advisory body towards an instrument of direct rule, or *velayat-e motlaq-e faqih* (absolute guardianship of the jurisprudent). Some scholars point to Khomeini's 1988 *fatwa*, giving precedence to decrees issued by the Leader over those of other *marjas*, as the beginning of this move towards absolute guardianship (Behrooz 1996). In any case, under Khamenei, the traditional right faction and the Leader's supporters within the security establishment emerged as foremost supporters of *velayat-e motlaq-e faqih*. In 1994, the clerical establishment promoted Khamenei to the rank of ayatollah, even though he lacked the necessary scholarly credentials.

Despite the legalisation and expansion of the Leader's powers, Khamenei was aware that his practical authority was far from absolute and that it was highly dependent on the support of guardianship institutions. Thus, immediately

upon his assent, he set out to consolidate his position through a series of tactical moves and by building a network of loyalists inside both pillars of the regime (Keddie 2006: 263; Tezcür 2012: 94). Not satisfied with his constitutional powers, he worked to enhance his oversight of the political establishment, the security sector and the country's socio-economic life through his expanding army of representatives, control over Friday prayer leaders and the Supreme Court of the Clergy as well as his patronage over the powerful *bonyads* (foundations).

Dubbed the 'clerical commissars', the Leader's personal representatives (*nemayandegan-e rahbar*) are strategically placed in every important state institution, including government ministries run by elected officials, and serve as the Leader's eyes and hands in these institutions (Shakibi 2010; Buchta 2000: 47). Within the military, the representatives have an office of their own, known as the Ideological and Political Bureau. In universities, they supervise curricula and monitor student activities to ensure their adherence to the moral, religious and ideological guidelines prescribed by the Office of the Leader (*Daftar-e Maqam-e Moazam-e Rahbari*). While this office consisted of several dozen confidants under Khomeini, under Khamenei it became a vast bureaucratic body with thousands of representatives.

The appointment of Friday prayer leaders is another tool at the Leader's disposal. In the IRI, Friday sermons serve as political propaganda platforms used by prayer leaders to expound the virtues of the *velayat-e faqih* system and garner support for government policies. Although Majles provides the budget for Friday prayers, the elected house has no effective control over the contents of the sermons. The Leader appoints prayer leaders for every city and these leaders often wield greater authority than local representatives of the state, such as governors or mayors (Shakibi: 122). Khamenei himself serves as the main prayer leader for Tehran and uses this forum to publicise his position on foreign and domestic issues or to arbitrate inter-factional disputes. However, Khamenei has not monopolised this institution: leading clerical figures from the revolutionary era, such as Hashemi Rafsanjani and Abdul-Karim Mousavi Ardebili, also served as prayer leaders in the capital and within this strategic role, they were able to assert their positions in moments of internal division.

The Leader uses the Supreme Court of the Clergy to deal with clerical dissent. The SCC functions as a parallel court alongside the judiciary. Founded in the early days of the revolution in an effort to unite the clerical establishment under Khomeini, it remains an extra-constitutional institution with no civilian oversight or accountability. Although its formal function was to investigate acts of criminality by the clergy, Khamenei expanded the SCC's legal and political remit in the 1990s. Running an independent budget and its own security and prison system, and functioning behind closed doors, the court has been a key mechanism to suppress clerical opposition to the Leader (Künkler 2012).

Finally, the Leader's long arm extends into the politico-economic sphere through his control of the powerful foundations, or *bonyads*. Based on the tradition of clerically run religious charities, the *bonyads* have become the symbol of the politicisation of Islam and the unification of the religious establishment with the state. As the Shi'a clergy moved from being the guardians of the socially dispossessed to become the guardians of the political regime, their charities also experienced a parallel transformation (Saeidi: 479 – 88). Over time, these religious foundations evolved into an extensive patronage network designed to ensure the loyalty of the economic elite as well as the working class to the regime by acting as privileged business conglomerates on the one hand and as mass charities on the other. Having taken over the confiscated assets of Iran's leading Pahlavi-era industrialists, enjoying tax-exempt status and receiving state subsidies and foreign exchange at favourable rates, the *bonyads* operate as diversified holding companies, employ hundreds of thousands of people and manage hundreds of subsidiaries in every strategic sector of the economy (Kamrava and Hassan-Yari 2004). Answerable only to the Leader, who appoints their heads, and subject to no meaningful parliamentary oversight, the *bonyads* function as alternative power centres to governmental institutions, participating in domestic policy making by influencing and at times directly confronting elected officials.

The Guardian Council and the Expediency Council

The Guardian Council is the upper house of the legislative branch, which serves primarily as a check on the elected lower house. Of its twelve members, six are clerics appointed directly by the Leader while the non-clerical members are appointed by the Majles upon the recommendation of the head of the judiciary, who is also appointed by the Leader. With its influence over policy making and elections, the GC is the “first line of defence” of the institutions of regime guardianship against the republican institutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran (Shakibi 2010: 123). According to the 1989 Constitution, the Guardian Council reviews legislature for its conformity to the principles and commandments (*usul* and *ahkam*) of religion and the constitution (Article 72). It also supervises “the elections of the Assembly of Experts for Leadership, the President of the Republic, the Islamic Consultative Assembly, and the direct recourse to popular opinion and referenda” (Article 99). Articles 4 and 98 provide further constitutional powers and legitimacy to the GC: Article 4 calls for all laws and regulations to be based on “Islamic criteria”, and designates “the *fuqaha* of the Guardian Council” as “judges in this matter”. Article 98 stipulates, “The authority of the interpretation of the Constitution is vested with the Guardian Council, which is to be done with the consent of three-fourths of its members”.

The GC’s supervisory role over the republican pillar was expanded under both Khomeini and, especially, Khamenei. Under Khomeini, the criteria for running for office in IRI were tightened so as to require an active religious and political commitment to *velayat-e faqih*, rather than just a lack of expressed opposition to it. Under Khamenei, in 1991, the GC’s ‘supervisory role’ over the elections was redefined in a manner that gave the GC the power to vet and qualify all candidates running for election to the Majles, the presidency and the Assembly of Experts. The 1991 revision was a crucial blow to the independence of electoral institutions. The ability to control and manipulate elections and block legislation gave the conservatives, who dominated the GC after Khomeini’s death, a clear advantage in dealing with more popular factions that controlled the presidency or the Majles. Between 1980 and 1988, for example, the GC vetoed more than a third of the bills proposed by the lower house (Shakibi 2010: 123). It

disqualified more than a third and nearly half of the candidates running for Majles elections in 1992 and 1996 respectively, mostly from the Islamist left faction (Arjomand 2009: 63). In 2000, only 8% of the candidates were barred from running for election, leading to a resounding victory for Khatami's reform movement. In contrast in 2004, more than half of the reformist candidates were banned and the traditionalists regained control of the Majles. Finally, the GC has also routinely disqualified hundreds of applicants aspiring to run for presidency, allowing no more than a handful of individuals who represent the tolerated political factions within the IRI establishment.

Frequent clashes between the Guardian Council and the Majles during the 1980s led Ayatollah Khomeini to establish a third legislative organ in 1988: the Expediency Discernment Council of the Order (*Majma'-e Tashkhis-e Maslahat-e Nezam*, or Expediency Council, EC). A manifestation of the institutionalisation of the *maslahat* principle, the Expediency Council was tasked with settling disputes between the lower and upper chambers. Its authority was formally recognised with the 1989 amendments to the constitution. Article 110/1 defined it as an advisory body for the Leader in determining "the general policies of the Islamic Republic". Article 112 tasked the Leader with appointing the permanent and temporary members of the EC.

Khamenei added a further 27 members out of loyalists to the Council, which was initially composed of 13 members and included the president, head of the judiciary, the speaker of the parliament and the clerical members of the GC. In an attempt to stem the reformist surge within the republican institutions, Khamenei departed from the previous practice of appointing sitting presidents as chairman of the EC and re-appointed former president Rafsanjani in 1998, instead of Khatami.

The Assembly of Experts

The Assembly of Experts (*Majles-e Khobregan*) embodies elements of both the Islamic and the republican character of the IRI hybrid regime. It was established in 1982 to uphold the popular legitimacy of *velayat-e faqih* and to prevent it from evolving into personal dictatorship. The Assembly has been tasked with monitoring the activities of the Leader, dismissing him should he be deemed incapable of fulfilling his constitutional duties, acting in his place during the period of transition and appointing a new leader upon the death or dismissal of the previous one (Articles 107 and 111). It was this body that had designated Ayatollah Montazeri as Khomeini's successor in 1983, and then following his downfall, replaced him with Khamenei in 1989.

The Assembly is the sole body that functions as a theoretical democratic check on the guardians. All of its 86 members, who have to be qualified *fuqaha*, are elected for eight-year terms through popular vote. However, since the GC filters those clerics that may pose a credible threat to the Leader, the Assembly's actual impact on politics has been negligible. To date, it has not publicly challenged the Leader or questioned his authority. Nonetheless, the Assembly remains a critical institution for the future course of the IRI, as it is this body that will determine Khamenei's successor. For this reason, it has long been regarded as a prized institution by the major factions, which have competed to establish and maintain their influence in it.

The Security Sector: The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and the Basij

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC or *Pasdaran*) was established as a popular militia shortly after the initial triumph of the Iranian revolution in 1979, in an effort to watch over the distrusted elements of the shah's military, defend Khomeini's nascent regime against counterrevolution and suppress opposition to the charismatic leader. It has evolved over time to become one of the key institutions of the guardianship pillar, playing an increasingly assertive role in the Iranian economy and politics. Ayatollah Montazeri described the IRGC as "the

popular organ [...] which would protect [the revolution] and its purity and act as the powerful arm of the Islamic revolution and the protector of the oppressed the world over.”⁹⁵ Khomeini declared in 1987 that “the Guards were born of the revolution, grew with the revolution and will stay with it.”⁹⁶

The IRGC’s foray into the politico-economic realm occurred in three phases: the loosely organised militia became a key component of the security sector during the war with Iraq. Their sacrifice in the ‘sacred defence’ against Iraq – through mobilising the masses in paramilitary units known as the *Basij* that served as human shields against Saddam Hussein’s well-equipped army – provided the IRGC with institutional legitimacy and guardianship status. The ‘sacred defence’ provided the Islamic revolution with its ultimate heroes. The army of selfless believers who, in line with the Shi’a tradition of martyrdom, willingly gave their lives to defend the faith, the country and the revolution against the mechanical onslaught of a foreign invader backed by western imperialism found a place at the heart of the IRI’s founding mythology (Farhi 2004).

After the war, the political leadership encouraged the Guards to assume a leading role in reconstruction efforts. During this period, *Khatam al-Anbiya*, the engineering arm of the IRGC, grew into one of Iran’s largest contractors in industrial and development projects, with subsidiaries in construction, mining, transport, manufacturing and energy sectors, receiving preferential treatment from the government (Wehrey: 59 – 64). At the same time, the *Basij* militia transformed from being a wartime mobilisation unit into a major socio-economic entity with extensive ties to the *bazaar* and presence in the construction, banking, real estate and telecommunication sectors. Providing employment and social benefits to its members and their families, the *Basij* has come to command an extensive popular base concentrated mainly in the rural provinces and urban working class neighbourhoods (Golkar: 625 – 648). Finally, from the late 1990s onwards, the IRGC started playing a growing role in Iran’s factional politics. Not only did former guardsmen such as Mohsen Rezaei, Ali Larijani and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad emerge as prominent political figures, but the institution itself

⁹⁵ *Kayhan*, 27 April 1982, quoted in Omid, p. 106.

⁹⁶ *Kayhan*, 17 December 1987; quoted in Ibid, p. 110.

became a direct contributor to the ideological clashes between rival factions despite claims of neutrality. Ahmadinejad's election as the mayor of Tehran in 2003 and the president of the IRI in 2005 confirmed the Guards' entry into their third – political – phase.

Despite the constitutional reference to the “brotherly cooperation and harmony” between the IRGC and the regular military (*Artesh*), their relationship has been mired with tension. This is due to the IRGC's ambiguously defined duty of “guarding the revolution and its achievements” (Article 150) and its emergence as a parallel military force engaged in domestic and foreign operations. Although smaller in size and more limited in function than those of the regular military, the IRGC possesses its own naval and air forces. Its elite unit, the *Qods Force*, specialises in covert overseas operations. The Guards' responsibilities also clash with those of the civilian ministries. Their intelligence arm functions independently from the Ministry of Intelligence and Security and operates its own prisons. The law enforcement duties carried out by the *Basij*, especially in dealing with protests and demonstrations, overlap with those of the police force, which is controlled by the Ministry of the Interior (Wehrey: 8 – 13).

With these intentional overlaps and rivalries, the IRGC effectively acts as a check on the elected government and the *Artesh*, which the guardians consider ideologically less fervent and therefore less reliable. Furthermore, this complex architecture becomes simpler at the very top. As the commander-in-chief, the Leader appoints senior commanders of both the *Artesh* and the IRGC, and has the final word in the Supreme National Security Council (*Shora-ye Ali-ye Amniat-e Melli*, SNSC), composed of the highest-ranking civilian, clerical and military officials. Unlike the Majles, which has no oversight capability over the IRGC, the Leader monitors and controls the entire security sector through his representatives.

Despite this institutional supremacy, the extent of the Leader's practical authority over the IRGC has fluctuated based on the changing balance of powers in factional politics of the IRI. By the same token, however, it is not true that the IRGC has become the dominant guardianship institution within the regime; a praetorian guard that has supplanted the clerical institution behind closed

doors.⁹⁷ Rather, both the Leader and the IRGC have come to rely on each other for political and institutional support (Safshekan and Sabet 2010; Hen-Tov and Gonzalez 2011). It is important to emphasise that the IRGC is not a monolithic institution representing a single political agenda (Harris 2013). Wider socio-economic and factional divisions have influenced the Guards; a point that will come through in more detail in the next chapter. While the political role that the IRGC might play after Khamenei is open to speculation, as long as the Leader is alive and controls the Guards' senior cadre, the IRGC's independence should not be overstated.

Republican institutions of the IRI

The Presidency

The President of the IRI, elected every four years by popular vote amongst candidates approved by the Guardian Council, represents the second highest office in the Islamic Republic, after that of the Leader. Whereas the Leader is considered the representative of God in the IRI, the President is the representative of the People. According to Article 113 of the constitution, the president is responsible "for implementing the Constitution and acting as the head of the executive, except in matters directly concerned with the Leadership." The president's powers include appointing and dismissing ministers, controlling the Planning and Budget Organisation (*Sazman-e Barname va Budje*), appointing the head of the Central Bank, and chairing the Supreme National Security Council. On the other hand, he has limited authority over defence, security and foreign policy issues, which fall within the exclusive domain of the Leader.

Under Khomeini, the executive office was split between the president and the prime minister. The presidency, held by Khamenei after Bani Sadr's impeachment until 1989, was a more ceremonial office. The main executive

⁹⁷ Voiced most prominently by Vali Nasr in the mid-2000s, this view gained traction in the West after the 2009 presidential election. Most notably, then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton argued the Guards were "supplanting the government of Iran". See Nasr and Gheissari (2004); "Clinton: Iran moving toward military dictatorship", *Reuters*, 15 February 2010.

office was the prime ministry, held by Mir Hossein Mousavi during the same period. The charismatic leader personally mediated the frequent clashes between the two men, who represented the interests of the conservative (right) and Islamic left factions. After Khomeini, Khamenei and Rafsanjani entered into an alliance to marginalise the Islamic left. They pushed through the constitutional referendum of 1989, which also combined the powers of the two executive bodies in a single presidency. Rafsanjani orchestrated Khamenei's selection as Leader, and Khamenei supported Rafsanjani's virtually uncontested bid for the presidency.

Despite systematic encroachments by the guardians of the powers of elected officials, Iranian presidents since 1989 have been more than mere figureheads. As charismatic individuals with popular support, presidents of the post-Khomeini era have wielded varying degrees of influence over the political and economic trajectory of the IRI. Each presidency from Rafsanjani to Rouhani came to represent the popular expression of discontent with the regime's failure to deliver on the Iranian revolution's numerous promises. Consequently, the nature of the relationship between the head of the Islamic pillar and the head of the republican pillar has by and large determined the stability of the political establishment in post-Khomeini Iran. Prolonged periods of discord between the two men jeopardised this stability and threatened to alter the regime's core hybrid structure. Not one to shy away from confrontation, Khamenei's response to the reformist and neo-conservative challenges to the institutional domination of the traditionalist guardians have been crucial in shaping the institutional architecture of the hybrid regime. I will discuss these critical episodes of discord and negotiation in detail in Chapters 5 and 7.

The Islamic Consultative Assembly

The Islamic Consultative Assembly, or the Majles, is the lower house of the legislative and the main institution that embodies the popular will of the electorate to the extent this is permitted by the guardians. It also symbolises the pursuit of democratic and constitutional government in Iran that dates back to the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-6. The Majles drafts legislation (Article 71), approves international treaties, protocols, contracts and agreements (Article 77), authorises imposition of emergency laws (Article 79), approves domestic and foreign loans (Article 80), and has the power to question the president and ministers and remove them from office. Its 290 members (increased from 272 in 2000) are elected every four years.

In the words of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Majles is “the sole centre which all must obey. It is the starting point for everything that happens in the state. Submission to the Majles means submission to Islam and stands above all other institutions” (Shakibi 2010: 127). Although it never quite enjoyed such supreme authority in the hybrid architecture of the IRI, during his lifetime Khomeini often used his charismatic authority in support of the Majles, then controlled by the Islamic left faction, against the conservative dominated GC. In 1981, in the midst of a row between the two bodies over land reform, Khomeini designated the Majles as the competent institution to decide on issues of necessity (*zarurat*), whereby it could ignore the objections of the GC (Khadija and Frings-Hessami 2001: 145). But given the ambiguous and contested meaning of the religiously-rooted concept of *zarurat*, this intervention led to further clashes between the two bodies. In 1984, Khomeini ordered that if a bill had two-thirds majority, the Majles could override the GC’s veto in the interest of expediency (*maslahat*). Between 1984 and 1988, this decree emboldened the Majles considerably vis-à-vis the GC. However, the arrangement was overshadowed by another decree by the charismatic leader, who, in his continued effort to stem factional and institutional disagreements, established the Expediency Council in 1988.

Following Khomeini’s death, conservatives who controlled the guardianship institutions set out to constrain the authority of the leftist dominated Majles. The 1989 amendments, which expanded the Leader’s powers

and formally institutionalised the EC, were followed by the 1991 revision to the GC's supervisory role over elections. Yet despite these limitations, the Majles elections in the IRI - like the presidential ones - often included an element of unpredictability and competition and fielded genuine choice, admittedly within tolerated and pre-determined limits. They have also featured lively debates where rival interpretations of Khomeini's legacy and visions for the future of the regime and the country clashed in public.

In other words, despite taking place in the long shadow of the guardianship institutions, elections have been a crucial legitimising force for the IRI hybrid regime. For years, they were the preferred method for "managing popular participation, socializing the newer generations into the Islamic Republic, and regulating, and ultimately, negotiating intraelite competition" (Farhi 2012: 3). The guardians consistently present voter turnout in the Majles and presidential elections as evidence of continued popular support for the regime. And at least until the presidential election of 2009, they sought to strike a delicate balance between accommodating the will of the electorate without jeopardising their positions of power and institutional supremacy or compromising from the dominant ideological strand within the guardian state. When that balance became impossible to maintain, or the popular tendency appeared to challenge the socio-political status quo, the guardians have typically chosen to constrain the electoral space.

Factional politics in the IRI

Despite the repeated emphasis on the popular legitimacy of the regime, government has been by and large an elite occupation in Khomeinist Iran. Three decades after the revolution, the core cadre of the leadership elite in the IRI still consisted of an exclusive group of individuals that were united in their shared experiences of opposition to the Pahlavi regime and the war with Iraq, as well as a declared loyalty to the person and teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini. But in their interpretations of the revolution's goals and the charismatic leader's legacy, these people were sharply divided. As I noted in Chapter 3, some of these

divisions resulted from the ambiguities and contradictions in Khomeini's words and deeds during his ten years in charge of a modern state apparatus much more complex than the simple planning body he had envisioned in *Hokumat-e Islami*. According to Moslem:

Although Khomeini's concept of the Islamic government emphasised the Islamicity of the post-revolutionary regime, he did not provide specific guidelines about what this Islamicity meant in terms of governing principles of particular policies in different spheres of government. Moreover, by repeatedly oscillating and changing his views on major issues during the ten years of his leadership, Khomeini offered differing and at times conflicting readings on what constituted a 'true' Islamic republic. (2002: 4)

These contradictions were theoretical as well as practical in nature. With regards to religious scholarship, the charismatic leader attempted to accommodate and use interchangeably two opposing interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence: traditional vs. dynamic (*fiqh-e sonnati* vs. *fiqh-e pooya*).⁹⁸ Although Khomeini defended traditional jurisprudence, he also called for religious scholars to maintain a flexible attitude in interpreting Islamic law.⁹⁹ Indeed, his revolutionary programme and his frequent resort to *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and *maslahat* during his final years were exercises in dynamic jurisprudence. Factional divisions in Iran reflect Khomeini's oscillations in policy and jurisprudence as well as the conflicting goals of the Iranian revolution. Typically, the conservative clerics that dominate the Society of the Militant Clergy (*Jame'e-ye Rouhaniyat-e Mobarez*, JRM), the umbrella organisation founded in 1977 in opposition to the Pahlavi regime, have supported traditional jurisprudence, while the Association of Combatant Clerics

⁹⁸ Proponents of traditional *fiqh* hold that primary sources of Islam – Quran and the *Sunnah* (the prophet's teachings) – are sufficient to govern an Islamic society and that religious judges should avoid resorting to secondary sources (*ahkam-e sanaviyeh*) as much as possible in everyday governance. In contrast, supporters of dynamic *fiqh* argue that although primary sources constitute the necessary base for Islamic government, changing times and needs of modern society necessitate greater dependence on secondary sources, namely *ijma* (consensus), *qiyas* (analogy) and especially *ijtihad* (independent reasoning).

⁹⁹ "I believe in the traditional jurisprudence [...] and do not consider its violation to be permissible. This is the only correct way of *ijtihad*. But it does not mean that there is no room for further development in the Islamic Jurisprudence. In *ijtihad*, time and place occupy a fundamental position." (Khomeini 2006: 189)

(*Majma'-e Rowhaniyun-e Mobarez*, MRM), composed of leftists that split from the JRM in 1988, advocate dynamic jurisprudence.

The early political factions in the IRI should not be understood as mass-based political parties. At least until the rise of the reform movement in the late 1990s, these were informal coalitions that lacked explicitly stated programmes and hierarchical organisational structures, and relied extensively on the personal charisma and intra-elite networks of the leading figures (Moslem 2002: 91). Frequent clashes between the right (conservative) and the Islamic left factions dominated politics during the 1980s and eventually led Ayatollah Khomeini to abolish the official party of the regime, the Islamic Republican Party in 1987. The disbanding of the IRP was an important decision that further highlighted factions as the basic vehicle of political activity in the IRI, cutting across both pillars of the regime.

A consequence of this arrangement was the relatively weak organisational link between the regime elite and the socio-political constituencies they sought to represent in the absence of institutionalised party mechanisms (Khosrokhavar 2000: 2 – 29; Tuğal 2009: 256). Until the late 1990s, mass participation in politics took place mainly around the mosques and religious organisations. During the 1990s, the ideologues of the reform movement, which emerged from the marginalised Islamic left without its uncompromising anti-imperialism and economic statism, realised the need (and the opportunity) for the institutionalisation of a formal party mechanism that would resist the traditionalist right's emasculation of the republican pillar by strengthening civil society (*jame'e-ye madani*) and energise a fast growing young generation who were not necessarily drawn to the mosque and lacked political representation (Razavi 2010).

Organised mass mobilisation brought the reformists victories in two consecutive presidential elections and one Majles election at the turn of the millennium. This also led other factions to put greater emphasis on mass participation as well. Ultimately, however, the reformist leadership did not succeed in institutionalising party politics within the movement, let alone in the IRI. Shakibi (2010: 321) notes that while President Khatami's senior advisor Saeed Hajjarian insisted on building a party mechanism, Khatami relied too

much on civil society, the power of rhetoric and public opinion, all of which could be suppressed, as they eventually were. The fluctuating dynamics between major factions and the Leader, and their impact on the institutional architecture of the hybrid regime, will be the focus of the next chapter on Iran. Let me conclude by saying that the charisma and personality of leading factional figures and interpersonal relations between them, including kinship and marriage ties, have continued to be a defining feature of politics in the IRI.¹⁰⁰

Institutionalisation of the hybrid regime in Turkey

Electoral politics and transition to multiparty democracy

The hybrid regime in Turkey was institutionalised over a longer time span and less overtly than in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The death of the charismatic leader in 1938 did not immediately alter the basic institutional character of the Turkish Republic. Until 1950, the year of the first competitive multiparty general election in Turkey, the Republican People's Party continued to rule the country without formal opposition. Under the presidency of İsmet İnönü, the statist military-bureaucratic wing of the leadership elite came to dominate the ruling CHP, while the CHP dominated socio-political life in the young republic. Inspired by the totalitarian currents of interwar Europe, Kemalist ideologues went on to pursue state-driven industrialisation schemes on the one hand and imposed the socio-cultural programme of secularisation/Turkification that had begun under Atatürk on the other. It was the Allied victory in the Second World War and the subsequent resurgence of the historically rooted Turkish fear of Russian expansionism that convinced İnönü, who had proven himself as a skilful pragmatist by keeping Turkey out of the war, to start navigating Turkey's strategic alignment with the emerging western axis.

¹⁰⁰ A vivid example is the case of Mohsen Rafiqdoost, who once served as the head of the powerful *Mostazafan bonyad*. Rafiqdoost was Khomeini's driver and is also related by marriage to Rafsanjani. Mousavi and his long time rival, Khamenei, are distant cousins. The tradition has continued with the new generation of political elites as well: Ahmadinejad's son is married to the daughter of his advisor, close confidant and former vice-president, Rahim Mashaei. See Ehteshami (1995: 48) and Theler (2010: 37 – 74).

While İnönü and the proponents of alignment with the West sought to legitimise this move as compliant with Atatürk's ideal of participating in 'contemporary civilisation', its critics within the military-bureaucratic establishment saw it as a compromise on the country's hard won national sovereignty. Indeed, the strategic rapprochement also entailed ideological realignment and politico-economic commitments. In exchange for military aid, economic assistance and a security guarantee from the US against Soviet expansionism, as part of newly formulated Truman Doctrine, the İnönü government put in place a series of economic and political liberalisation reforms, which included the transition to a free market economy and a multiparty political system. The first truly competitive multiparty election brought back to power the alliance of landowners and entrepreneurs, which had been outmuscled by the military-bureaucratic alliance following the charismatic leader's death.

Founded by prominent former CHP deputies Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Fuat Köprülü and Refik Koraltan, the *Demokrat Parti* promised to relax the state's social policies and to pursue a liberal economic agenda. This appealed to large portions of the electorate who had grown weary under decades of CHP rule and felt repressed and alienated by its forced secularisation and nationalist assimilation programme. Securing 53% the vote in 1950, the DP became the first popularly elected party in the history of the Turkish Republic and the first opposition party to take over the government from an incumbent through elections. It was also to become the first in a series of centre-right parties that would achieve overwhelming electoral success in Turkish politics in the decades to come: following on the political tradition of the DP, the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*, AP) of Süleyman Demirel in the late 1960s, the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP) of Turgut Özal in the 1980s, and the AKP of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the 2000s all succeeded in forming single-party governments carrying significant majorities. During its one decade in power spanning three general election victories, the DP government led by Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, anchored Turkey firmly in the western geopolitical camp, where it would remain during and after the Cold War. Turkey committed troops to the Korean War on the US side in 1950 and became full member of NATO in 1952. At

home, the DP carried out a robust capitalist development programme – benefiting both from the industrial foundations laid previously by the CHP and the financial and military assistance provided by the US Marshall Fund – and also relaxed restrictions on the expression of religious identity in public sphere (Ahmad 2005: 104 – 115).

Equally important as the *Demokrat Parti*'s victory in 1950 was İnönü's recognition of the outcome of the poll and his peaceful handover of power to his rivals, which set three important precedents for Turkish politics: in accepting defeat and consequently stepping down from the presidency, İnönü publicly acknowledged that neither he – the most powerful figure within the Kemalist establishment, whom GNA had declared as the 'National Chief' of Turkey in 1938 – nor the office of the president, had inherited the full charisma of Atatürk. From this point on, no single individual, including presidents and military chiefs, could claim a supra-political position as that of the charismatic leader.¹⁰¹ But, in contrast to the Iranian case, İnönü's move seems appropriate in the wider context of the gradual bureaucratisation of personal authority in the Ottoman/Turkish state dating, arguably, as far back as the seventeenth century. As an officer and statesman, İnönü was a product of this long-term transition.

Secondly, with the introduction of a multiparty system within a parliamentary framework, centralised and hierarchically structured political parties became the main vehicle of Turkish politics. Unlike the Iranian factions, these parties were "bureaucratic mass organisations" characterised by patron-client networks (Tuğal 2009: 257; Tezcür 2010: 108). In this arrangement, party mechanisms, which are formally linked to their socio-political constituencies, produce their own leaders from among these constituencies. Although powerful patriarchal figures loom large in Turkish politics and dominate party affairs, with the exception of a select few, these figures tend to be bound to the party mechanism, rather than the party mechanisms to them.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ For two Turkish eye-witness accounts of this era, see Aydemir (1975) and Arcayürek (1983).

¹⁰² Patriarchal party leaders like Deniz Baykal of the CHP (1992 – 2010) or Devlet Bahçeli of the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) (1997 to present) are two recent cases in point. Popular and charismatic figures like Turgut Özal and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who personalised politics in Turkey, go against this rule.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the smooth transition of power between two political parties created democratic path dependence. Ever since this first competitive vote, Turkish people have frequently expressed their will at the ballot box, rewarding or punishing political parties in largely free and fair elections. Election results have been generally trusted by the public and respected by victors and losers alike.

Coups d'état and the consolidation of military-bureaucratic guardianship

Despite its decades of experience with multiparty politics, it is not possible to categorise Turkey as a consolidated democracy. Przeworski (1991: 23) argues that democracy is consolidated when it becomes “the only game in town; when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions, when all losers want to do is to try again within the same institutions under which they have just lost.” In Turkey, periodic interference in the democratic process by extra-political actors has meant that transitions often took place via non-democratic means.

‘Extra-political’ interference in electoral politics has meant primarily a military intervention in Turkey, the first of which was the *coup d'état* of 27 May 1960. The *Demokrat Parti* dominated Turkish politics for a decade in part thanks to a winner-takes-all electoral system, the 1924 Constitution that vested excessive power in the hands of the executive at the expense of the legislative and the judiciary, and an opposition that was in institutional and ideological disarray. Lacking a system of democratic checks and balances, the DP gradually succumbed to the trappings of growing power and became increasingly authoritarian. It was at this point that a group of left-leaning junior officers broke the chain of command and overthrew the government, outlawed the DP and executed three of its leaders to ‘restore democracy and the Kemalist revolution’.

We should note that the DP was as much at pains to promote its policies in Kemalist terms as its predecessor. Many senior DP figures had close personal relations with Atatürk during his lifetime. Indeed, it was the DP government that criminalised “insulting the memory and legacy of Atatürk and damaging his

statues” in 1951 (Göktepe 2000: 142). Regardless, the supporters of the 1960 coup viewed the DP government as ‘counterrevolutionary’, and for decades to come referred to the intervention as ‘the May 27 revolution’.¹⁰³ In reality, the coup was neither democratic, regardless of the abuses of power under the DP government, nor mass based. Belge notes that among the statist officers and bureaucrats, there was a strong belief that the transition to multi-party politics was a critical mistake that would sabotage the modernising project by giving power to the people prematurely (2011: 617 – 18).

The conviction that the masses were not mature enough to govern themselves and thus needed constant supervision and occasional intervention in their affairs led the Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*, TSK) to justify every successive intervention as an unfortunate albeit necessary act to protect the Kemalist revolution, the democratic system and the people – from the people.¹⁰⁴ Like the 1950 election, the *coup d’état* of 1960 also set an important precedent as it established the TSK as the foremost institution of Kemalist guardianship and opened the way for future interventions in civilian politics. Henceforth it was up to the military to watch over political institutions in the country and protect the legacy of the charismatic leader, however that legacy was interpreted at any given period. After the 1960 coup, the TSK overthrew elected governments three more times, in 1971, 1980 and 1997. This meant that the personal charisma of the leader had been more or less transformed into the “office charisma” of the military-as-institution.

That charisma was no longer in possession of an individual – like İnönü – or personal office – such as the presidency – but rather an armed institution meant that, as the ‘top guardians’ of the Kemalist regime, the military could force the president to step down (as in 1960) or prompt the judiciary to outlaw political parties, including the CHP (as was the case after the 1980 coup). In fact, the military officers also could even defy their own superiors, including chiefs of the general staff. The junta that carried out the 1960 coup arrested Rüşti Erdelhun, the TSK chief who had opposed the officers’ political activism, and sentenced him to death alongside the DP leaders for collaborating with the

¹⁰³ See for example, Kili (1969).

¹⁰⁴ “Turkey’s Military Leader Vows to Restore Democracy”, *New York Times*, 6 January 1981.

government.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, in the early 2000s, senior generals frustrated with Chief of Staff Hilmi Özkök planned to outmanoeuvre him and intervene against the AKP government.

Various historical, social, religious and geopolitical arguments have been invoked to justify the TSK's self-appointed role as the guardian of the Kemalist regime. The Turkish military's carefully cultivated nationalist image depicts an institution with a glorious past dating from the Hunnish invasions of China to the heroic defence at the Battle of Gallipoli in WWI. The TSK credits itself as the institution that produced Mustafa Kemal, served as the engine of the Anatolian resistance movement and built a sovereign nation from the ruins of the defeated empire.¹⁰⁶ For decades the TSK enjoyed a popular reputation as the most professional, meritocratic and 'trustworthy' institution in Turkey, in contrast to the self-serving and corrupt image of civilian politicians. Furthermore, despite the strictly secularist ideology that its professional officer corps have been trained to uphold, the TSK continued to command respect and loyalty through deep rooted religious symbols of patriarchal authority in a society that refers to the military as 'the Prophet's hearth' (*Peygamber Ocağı*) and considers soldiering not only as a sacred duty towards the state, religion and the nation, but also a necessary sacrifice for attaining manhood (Heper 2002: 58; Akkoyunlu 2007: 21 – 25).

Finally, the military guardians have consistently upheld a perception of existential ideological threats to the regime and the country emanating from Turkey's sensitive geopolitical position to justify the existence of a guardianship structure, limitations on civil liberties and occasional interventions in the electoral process. This threat perception has evolved over time. Reflecting Turkey's role as a frontier country during the Cold War and the TSK's institutional ties to NATO, the military guardians depicted communism as the most serious security and ideological threat to the Kemalist regime. Consequently, both the 1971 and 1980 coups primarily targeted the wide spectrum of leftist movements across the country. In the aftermath of the 1980 coup, the ruling junta openly promoted a range of Islamist movements along

¹⁰⁵ Erdelhun's sentence was subsequently commuted to life imprisonment. He was granted presidential amnesty in 1964 and forced into retirement.

¹⁰⁶ See "History" in the official website of the Turkish General Staff, <http://www.tsk.tr>.

with neo-liberal economic policies as antidote to the left. Conversely, in the 1990s, political Islam and Kurdish separatism replaced communism at the top of the list of existential threats to the regime (İnsel and Bayramoğlu 2004).

However, despite these justification attempts, the guardianship role of the military was never fully legitimised. As I noted in Chapter 3, Atatürk did bestow upon the military the duty of guiding the nation and guarding the revolution. But unlike Khomeini during the 1980s, he did not design the institutional arrangement that gradually came into place following the 1960 coup. Nor did he articulate an overt political role for the military. In fact, as early as in 1924, the Turkish parliament passed a law preventing acting officers from involvement in politics.¹⁰⁷ The law did not have much practical significance at the time, given that the top cadres of the CHP and the state bureaucracy were already populated by former officers and that the TSK was loyal to the charismatic leader. But it did force future military guardians to limit their day-to-day involvement in politics to a behind-the-scenes role, except during those periods of direct intervention.

This had two contradictory outcomes for the Turkish guardians: on the one hand, by avoiding overt engagement in politics, the military successfully managed to present itself as uninvolved and uninterested in government affairs, hence conveniently placing responsibility for the country's socio-economic problems on the shoulders of civilian politicians. Yet on the other hand, it meant that whenever the military did intervene in politics, they were committing an act that was not explicitly sanctioned by the founding father; an act that could be interpreted, in and of itself, as illegitimate. Consequently, the institutional arrangement that was established as a result of the *coups d'état* was also built upon shaky legal and ideological grounds and needed constant justification. This made the Turkish guardians more vulnerable to changes in public opinion than their Iranian counterparts, whose constitutionally enshrined guardianship role had a visible stamp of the charismatic leader on it.

In contrast to the constitutions of the IRI, there is no direct reference to military guardianship in Turkey's constitutions, including the highly authoritarian 1982 Constitution. The Kemalist guardians have sought to justify

¹⁰⁷ Despite this legislation, Mustafa Kemal wore his uniform and maintained his military titles until 1927. See Özdağ (1991).

the legality of military interventions on the basis of Article 35 of the TSK's Internal Service Law, added after the 1960 coup, which read: "The duty of the TSK is to protect and watch over the Turkish motherland and the Turkish Republic as delineated by the Constitution." Although this article did not explicitly validate the TSK's political guardianship role, it was used as the legal basis of all *coups d'état*.

Institutions of Kemalist guardianship

What appears to distinguish the Turkish military from many of its politicised counterparts in Southern Europe, Latin America or Southeast Asia has been its general reluctance to govern Turkey directly. Indeed, after every intervention the TSK eventually returned power to civilian politicians and allowed competitive elections to be organised.¹⁰⁸ This transfer of power has led some scholars of political transitions to assume, rather inaccurately, that Turkey was on the path to democratisation following a spell of authoritarian rule as if the Turkish military actually had little interest in being involved in political affairs.¹⁰⁹ In fact, impact of the coups was not merely limited to those periods of direct military rule. All of the four major coups that the TSK carried out between 1960 and 1997 resulted in profound changes in Turkey's political and constitutional landscape that tilted the civil-military balance in favour of the latter. A new constitution was drafted by the ruling juntas following two direct interventions in 1960 and 1980, while the 1971 and 1997 interventions led to critical amendments to the exiting constitutions.

Every coup and subsequent constitutional change expanded the legal/institutional remit and influence of the military guardians, and their associates in civil society, politics and the bureaucracy, over Turkish politics and society at the expense of the civilian political authority. Consequently, even when

¹⁰⁸ After the 1960 coup, the military allowed an elected government to reassume authority in 1961. After the 1971 intervention, the junta returned power to civilian authorities in 1973. The longest period of direct rule by a military junta was between the coup of 12 September 1980 and the general elections that took place on 6 November 1983.

¹⁰⁹ See for example Brownlee (2009: 515 – 532).

the military guardians returned to the barracks, they were able to influence events through the institutions they had put in place as well as through their associates within the state bureaucracy, the judiciary, civil society as well as civilian politics. The resultant hybrid structure demarcated the affairs of the state (*devlet*) from the affairs of government (*hükümet*). Government came to indicate the realm of everyday politics; issues that could be entrusted to elected politicians and discussed publicly within 'permissible' boundaries drawn by the guardians. Beyond these boundaries started the realm of state affairs, understood as the exclusive domain of the guardians, who were deemed to possess the necessary personal, ideological and institutional credentials to make decisions on matters of national security, foreign policy orientation or the general socio-economic direction of the country.

The establishment of the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*, NSC) after the 1960 coup had the most profound impact on Turkey's institutional landscape. Described by Ümit Cizre (1997: 157 – 58) as "the embodiment of the bureaucracy's primacy over the popularly elected parliament", the NSC was founded as a governmental advisory body that brought together cabinet ministers and the prime minister, the president and the military high command on regular intervals to exchange views on developments. With every intervention the Council's influence over the elected government and the parliament increased noticeably, as did the clout and the number of its military members over its civilian wing. The 1982 Constitution expanded the authority of the NSC general secretary, who was always a military officer until 2004, and ensured that its 'recommendations' to the elected government were given "special consideration", making them in effect equivalent to official edicts (Articles 118 – 120).

Through its influence over the NSC, the military guardians also came to control the drafting of the National Security Policy Document (*Milli Güvenlik Siyaseti Belgesi*, NSPD). Dubbed Turkey's 'secret constitution', the NSPD is a classified document that outlines Turkey's national security policy, identifies internal and external threats and thus determines the permissible boundaries of public politics. The definition of national security, meanwhile, was redefined in a 1983 law in such broad and ambiguous terms that it could be interpreted to

cover any policy field.¹¹⁰ The NSPD is prepared by the NSC general secretariat and submitted to the NSC for approval without any parliamentary oversight of the drafting process (Cizre 2006: 59). Illustrating the importance of the document, former TSK Chief of Staff Doğan Güreş once described it as “the god of all policies, the mother of all constitutions: it is unthinkable to act against it.” (İnsel and Bayramoğlu 2004: 92).

The 1982 Constitution also equipped the presidency, largely a symbolic office after İnönü, with veto wielding powers over the GNA. Until a referendum in 2007 introduced direct presidential elections, Turkey’s presidents were elected by the GNA and were either former military generals, bureaucrats with solid Kemalist credentials or civilian politicians whom the generals thought they could control. These changes allowed the guardians to keep the government in check without appearing to be directly handling civilian politics. But in case the guardians needed more direct control of government affairs, the National Security Council also provided them with the relevant legal and constitutional justifications. Through its authority over the cabinet, the NSC was able to force the government to declare emergency law in parts or the whole of the country in the name of national security. Most of the country was under effective martial law from 1978 until 1983. In the Kurdish provinces emergency laws remained in place until 2002, suspending the democratic process and giving senior generals and centrally appointed bureaucrats a free hand in governing the region with very little parliamentary scrutiny, under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

The military’s control of the NSC and the NSPD also limited the civilian bodies’ ability to monitor the TSK’s economic activities. Institutions that were nominally charged with overseeing military procurements and the defence budget – i.e. the National Defence Commission and the Parliamentary Planning and Budget Commission and the Court of Accounts (*Sayıştay*) – were legally constrained by constitutional amendments and also lacked the will/clout to carry out their responsibilities. Meanwhile, the TSK made significant forays into the business world through the Armed Forces Pension Fund (*Ordu Yardımlaşma*

¹¹⁰ Article 2a of Law Number 2945 on the NSC defines national security as “the protection of the constitutional order of the state, its nation and integrity, all of its interests in the international sphere including political, social, cultural and economic interests, as well as the protection of its treaty rights against all threats both internal and external” (EC 2005: 14).

Kurumu, OYAK). Another product of the 1960 coup, OYAK grew over the decades – benefiting in particular from the privatisation schemes of the 1990s – to become a giant conglomerate with more than 60 affiliated companies involved in strategic sectors of the economy, from banking to energy, car manufacturing to construction. By the 2000s it had become one of Turkey's top three holding companies (Akça 2010). It enjoyed tax exempt status while its properties, revenues and debts benefited from all the rights and privileges of 'state properties' as outlined in the 1961 OYAK Law.¹¹¹

The judiciary, too, reflected the uneven relationship between the military-bureaucratic guardians and their civilian counterparts. The 1961 Constitution established the military courts. With the 1973 amendments and the 1982 Constitution these acquired the power to try civilians, while at the same time the civilian courts' jurisdiction over military personnel was restricted (Akay 2010: 15 – 17). Military coups also gradually shaped the structure of civilian courts. Also established by the 1961 Constitution, the Constitutional Court (*Anayasa Mahkemesi*) was tasked with reviewing the constitutionality of legislature enacted by the parliament and was equipped with the power to dissolve political parties and ban or imprison politicians on the grounds of acting against the constitution.

According to 1961 Constitution, military and civilian high judiciary, the president, the parliament and the senate (which was established in 1961 and abolished in 1980) each appointed a fixed number of members to the Constitutional Court. The 1982 Constitution transferred the power of appointment exclusively to the president, who chose from candidates presented to him by various state institutions. While between 1963 and 1980 the Constitutional Court outlawed six political parties, 19 parties were banned between 1980 and 2008.¹¹² Outlawed parties were almost exclusively from the leftist, Kurdish or Islamist backgrounds (Hakyemez 2008). The 1982 Constitution also re-established the State Security Courts (*Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri*, SSC), which were first created in 1973 but abolished by the Constitutional Court in 1975. Charged with overseeing cases that include crimes

¹¹¹ OYAK Law, No. 205.

¹¹² 'Anayasa Mahkemesi 44 Yılda 24 Parti Kapattı', *Bianet*, 21 November 2007, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/103054-anayasa-mahkemesi-44-yilda-24-parti-kapatti>.

against state security (a highly ambiguous and expansive jurisdiction), and characterised by weak defendant rights, long detention periods (lasting in some cases over a decade), systematic torture under detention and heavy prison sentences, the SSCs became the embodiment of the military's dominance over the state and the state's authoritarian grip over society in the post-1980 era.¹¹³ They were the main judicial instrument through which the state attempted to suppress the left in the 1980s and the Kurdish rebellion in the 1990s. Based on a law that was in effect from 1991 until 1999, a military judge had to be included amongst the panel of three judges in every case.

Finally, the 1973 amendments and the 1982 Constitution took away many of the civil liberties and fundamental freedoms that were enshrined in the 1961 Constitution. Limitations came in place under the pretext of safeguarding "national sovereignty, the republic, national security, public order, general peace, the public interest, public morals and public health".¹¹⁴ For instance, widening the scope of earlier restrictions placed on labour unions, Article 52 of the 1982 Constitution made it illegal for unions to "pursue a political cause, engage in political activity, receive support from political parties or give support to them". In part as an attempt to curtail the parliamentary representation of smaller but vocal left-wing parties, a 10% election threshold was put in place, which remains the highest in Europe. With the two regulatory institutions set up under the 1982 Constitution and controlled by the NSC – the Council of Higher Education (*Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu*, YÖK) and the Higher Council of Radio and Television (*Radyo Televizyon Üst Kurulu*, RTÜK) – universities and the media came under the guardians' control.

¹¹³ Article 143 of the 1982 Constitution established the SSCs "to deal with security offenses against the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation, the free democratic order, or against the Republic whose characteristics are defined in the Constitution, and offenses directly involving the internal and external security of the State."

¹¹⁴ Amendment to Article 11 of 1961 Constitution. See <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa61.htm>
For a comparison of the two constitutions, see Parla (2007).

Geopolitics of guardianship: Turkey as NATO member

As I noted, the military-bureaucratic guardians of the Kemalist regime have presented Turkey's sensitive geopolitical location as justification for the existence of the guardianship institutions. Crucially, the audience for this justification was not only the people of Turkey, but also the country's western allies in NATO. Throughout the Cold War and in the 1990s, Turkey's 'geostrategic indispensability' for the West prompted the western security establishment to actively support the Kemalist guardians' efforts to keep society and politics in check. As maintaining Turkey's pro-western orientation proved to be a higher priority than maintaining its democracy, Turkey's NATO allies, the US in particular, either tacitly approved or directly backed the military's interventions and turned a blind eye to the state's violations of civil liberties and human rights.¹¹⁵

The military junta that replaced the DP government declared in its first official communiqué its commitment to NATO and CENTO.¹¹⁶ The junta-led government was officially recognised by the British and American governments within three days of the coup. The 1971 intervention took place in the midst of intensifying societal tensions between left and right wing popular movements and organisations. The intervention was carried out by senior generals committed to the NATO structure, three days after a failed coup by a group of left leaning junior officials (TBMM 2012). Finally, the CIA's knowledge and Washington's support of the 1980 coup was acknowledged by the agency's then Ankara chief, Paul Henze (Birand 1987). The US support for the pro-NATO coup was part of a geopolitical effort to keep Turkey anchored in the western security establishment shortly after the Iranian revolution and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

The end of the Cold War did not immediately alter the core dynamics of this strategic cooperation between the Turkish military and the western security establishment. During the 1990s, Turkey continued to provide military and

¹¹⁵ Needless to say, Turkey's case was not exceptional within the Cold War framework.

¹¹⁶ CENTO, or the Central Eastern Treaty Organisation, also known as the Baghdad Pact, was a security cooperation agreement between Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey and the United Kingdom that remained in place between 1955 and 1979.

logistical assistance to US and NATO-led operations, including the Gulf War, Somalia, Yugoslavia and, in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks in the US, against the Taliban in Afghanistan. For its part, Washington increased security coordination with Turkey, which included subsidised arms sales to the Turkish military in support of its campaign against the Kurdish insurgents.¹¹⁷ In doing so, Washington turned a blind eye to the atrocities committed by the military during the 'dirty war'. Likewise, both the US and the European Union quietly approved the guardians' last successful intervention against a civilian government in 1997 (Akkoyunlu, Nicolaidis and Öktem 2013: 44 – 51).

But the role of Turkey's allies in the western security establishment in institutionalising the guardianship structure goes beyond expressing support for military coups. More importantly, the establishment was instrumental in laying the foundations of an underground and extra-legal network of security sector actors, bureaucrats and civilians, often referred to in Turkey as the 'deep state'. Within the framework of a US-led initiative to set up anti-communist 'stay behind' paramilitary groups and sleeper cells across NATO member states in Europe, a secretive 'Special Warfare Department' (*Özel Harp Dairesi*) was founded inside the Turkish military in cooperation with the American intelligence services (TBMM 2012: 115 – 132).

The department was set up in September 1952, but for over two decades neither the Turkish public nor elected politicians had any knowledge of its existence.¹¹⁸ Finding out about it almost accidentally in 1974, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit was the first elected official to question publicly the presence of a mysterious counter-guerrilla organisation within the state.¹¹⁹ Trained in unconventional warfare methods and drawing their recruits mainly from members of far-right nationalist groups, the counter-guerrilla units attached to this department were 'invisible' to the law or to parliamentary scrutiny. During the Cold War, they functioned as assassination squads, targeting 'subversives', and were widely suspected of orchestrating some of the most critical (and

¹¹⁷ Turkey's weapons purchases from the US exceeded USD 6 billion in worth between 1992 and 1999. In 1997 alone, the US delivered more arms to the Turkish military than the entire period between 1950 and 1983 (Gabelnick, Hartung and Washburn 1999).

¹¹⁸ The original name of the department was 'The Mobilisation Monitoring Council' (*Seferberlik Tetkik Kurulu*).

¹¹⁹ Interview with Ecevit, *Sabah*, 11 April 2005.

unresolved) episodes of political violence in Turkey, such as the Taksim Square massacre on Labour Day 1977 or the sectarian killings in the city of Maraş in 1978, which were in turn used to justify the 1980 coup.

While the demise of the left in Turkey following the 1980 coup and the collapse of the Soviet Union a decade later stripped the Turkish counter-guerrilla of its original *raison d'être*, institutions of the 'deep state' did not abrogate themselves. Nor were they exposed and disassembled by the elected political authority of the day. There was, in other words, no public trial in Turkey similar to Italy's 'Operation Gladio' in the 1990s (Ganser 2005). Instead, the 'dirty war' in the Kurdish provinces during this decade provided the extra-legal extension of the guardians with a new *raison d'être*, a new public enemy to legitimise their existence, as well as a new terrain on which they could operate in relative freedom. In the atmosphere of legal and political impunity created by the emergency laws and the SSCs that governed life in the Kurdish provinces in the 1990s, the underground counter-guerrilla organisation, along with quasi-official intelligence units and members of the special police forces, carried out systematic detainment, torture and assassination of civilians in the region.¹²⁰ It was also at this shadowy intersection that the politico-economic interests of these security sector actors became increasingly embroiled with those of civilian politicians, big business and organised crime under a thin ultra-nationalist cover.

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the institutional architecture and the evolution of the Iranian and Turkish hybrid regimes following the death of the charismatic leaders. Both the Khomeinist and Kemalist regimes were consolidated as hybrid, featuring a dualistic institutional arrangement where guardianship institutions co-existed with electoral institutions, constraining their authority and determining the tolerated limits of socio-political activity in the name of Kemalism and Khomeinism. In the IRI, the Office of the Supreme Leader, the

¹²⁰ For more on the most notorious of these secretive units, the intelligence and counter-terrorism cell of the gendarmerie (known as JITEM) see 'The Intelligence Issue and JITEM' in (İnsel and Ali Bayramoğlu 2010: 178).

Guardian Council and the Expediency Council act as the core guardianship institutions. Controlled by the Leader, the judiciary, *bonyads* and the IRGC also serve important guardianship roles. The IRGC's growing presence in Iranian politics and economy is likely to influence the future course of the IRI, especially after Khamenei. The presidency and the Majles constitute the republican pillar of the IRI. Devised to serve as a bridge between the dual pillars, the Assembly of Experts displays a hybrid characteristic itself.

Guardianship has been less direct in Turkey. With a claim for the charismatic legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and an emphasis on its central role in the foundational period of the republic, the Turkish military branded itself the guardian of the Kemalist regime, supported by the high judiciary and the bureaucracy. With every direct intervention, which took place with the implicit approval or support of the West, the military guardians deepened and expanded their influence over society and politics, through constitutional changes and institutions like the National Security Council. The impersonal nature of guardianship and electoral politics in Turkey also stands in contrast with the relatively informal, decentralised and individual-focussed nature of factional politics in Iran.

The next three chapters will investigate the core socio-political dynamics within these regimes in the post-Cold War period, and their impact on the trajectory of institutional change in the Iranian and Turkish hybrid regimes.

CHAPTER 5

THE FALL OF THE HYBRID REGIME IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Introduction

The end of the Cold War significantly altered the geopolitical and ideological environment in which the Islamic Republic of Iran endeavoured to survive during the first decade of its existence. But the critical turning point for the IRI had already come with the end of the war with Iraq in 1988 and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989. The war with Iraq served as an excuse to delay some of the unfulfilled promises of the revolution, namely, social justice, economic development and the rule of law. Its end brought these expectations back to the top of the agenda, increasing the popular pressure on the regime. In addition, in the absence of a charismatic leader who could act as the ultimate arbiter in political conflicts, factional disputes became sharper and more visible. The constitutional amendments of 1989 were in anticipation of the new era that was unfolding. The 1989 Constitution sought to institutionalise Khomeini's charisma, expanded his powers and essentially divided it between the Leader and the President, albeit heavily favouring the former, as I discussed in Chapter 4. These posts were subsequently taken up by two of the charismatic leader's most senior lieutenants: Ali Khamenei and Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

While succession took place in a relatively smooth manner, hybridity immediately became the most prevalent political characteristic of the post-Khomeini Iran. Clashing claims over sovereignty, ambiguously divided between the Islamic and republican institutions, created consistent systemic tensions between the Leader and every elected president since 1989. Every presidential era saw factional rivalries intensify and represented a major challenge to the

regime's guardians on the basis of the main debates and promises of the revolution: the Rafsanjani presidency was about the IRI's economic direction in the post-Khomeini/post-Cold War environment, as much as the personal rivalry between the regime's two most prominent figures. The main theme of the Khatami presidency was establishing the rule of law and strengthening the republican pillar of the IRI. During this period, institutional duality was not only a key characteristic of the IRI regime, but also one of its central political issues. Finally, Ahmadinejad's presidency brought to the fore the issue of socio-economic injustice and the IRI's unfulfilled promise of eradicating inequality between the regime elites and the populace.

Starting their relationship cordially and with expressions of mutual respect, all three presidents eventually clashed with the Leader and had fallen out of favour by the end of their respective second terms. These processes exposed the highly personalised nature of political leadership in the IRI, which fuelled the various factional and institutional tensions inherent in the regime's hybrid structure. This chapter will look into the core dynamics, major debates and key moments of tension in the IRI during the Rafsanjani, Khatami and Ahmadinejad presidencies. I argue that the regime lost its hybrid character with the collapse of the electoral system as a mechanism of popular legitimation and factional management following the disputed presidential vote in 2009. The election of Hassan Rouhani and the apparent return to hybridity in 2013 will be covered in Chapter 7.

Politics of reconstruction: The Rafsanjani presidency

The Iranian Thermidor and the Leader-President coalition

Numerous observers of the IRI suggested that following the end of the war with Iraq, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, the constitutional changes of 1989 and the election of Hashemi Rafsanjani as president, Iran had entered the 'Thermidor', i.e. the closing stages of the revolution where charismatic authority is bureaucratised and political and economic pragmatism prevails over

revolutionary fervour.¹²¹ Indeed, all these events symbolised important turning points for the IRI. But the anticipation of the Thermidor, which grew with Khatami's victory in 1997 (Rajaei 1999; Wells 1999), was dampened by the early 2000s, with the Leader having thwarted the reformist challenges to his authority with the help of his allies and loyalists in the Guardian Council, the Expediency Council, the judiciary and the IRGC.

The power struggle between Khamenei and Rafsanjani that defined the second term of Rafsanjani's presidency (1993 – 1997) was in the first place a personal one – i.e. the clash of two powerful and ambitious regime insiders – rather than an ideological or institutional one. Yet, at the beginning of his first term (1989 – 1993), little ideological or even institutional discord existed between the two men. The Rafsanjani presidency did not, in and of itself, constitute a challenge to the Leader, much less to the system of *velayat-e faqih*. After all, the trusted right hand man of Ayatollah Khomeini, Rafsanjani was the ultimate regime insider. Following the charismatic leader's death, he became the chief engineer of the conservative initiative to marginalise the Islamic left faction, orchestrating the constitutional amendments that enabled his ally, Ali Khamenei to become Leader and created a single executive office in the strengthened presidency, which he subsequently assumed. Two of the most powerful men in the IRI at the time, occupying the regime's two most important posts, divided Khomeini's charisma and authority into two parts and started governing Iran as a 'duumvirate'.

Khamenei and Rafsanjani also shared similar politico-religious views: both were political pragmatists and proponents of dynamic *fiqh* (Arjomand 2009: 37). By the late 1980s, they were largely in agreement over the direction that the IRI needed to take. This involved, first and foremost, addressing the profound economic devastation and social dislocation caused by a decade of revolution and war; and secondly, a revision of the regime's foreign policy priorities. The eight-year war claimed nearly a million lives in total and left millions more permanently disabled and psychologically traumatised.¹²² The war

¹²¹ See for example Jean-François Bayart (1991); Ehteshami (1995); "Thermidor at Last: Hashemi-Rafsanjani's Presidency and the Economy" in Arjomand (2009: 56 – 71).

¹²² Estimates of war casualties range from the Iranian government figure of 300,000 to over a million. See Hiro (1991: 205) and Abrahamian (2008: 171 – 175).

inflicted extensive damage on the country's physical infrastructure: its direct and indirect cost on the economy was calculated at USD 627 billion (Rajaei 1997: 2). By 1989, per capita income had fallen by nearly 45% from 1977/78 (Ehteshami 1995: 100). To illustrate the true extent of the war's economic burden on the two resource-rich neighbours, Rajaei noted that "the total cost of the war exceeds the oil revenue of the two states throughout the twentieth century." (1997: 2). Despite such immense human and economic sacrifice, Iran's territorial and geopolitical gains were modest. Ideologically, not only had Khomeini's universalistic message failed to instigate new revolutions abroad, but the Islamic Republic found itself in growing political and economic isolation, being able to count only Syria as an ally, and South Yemen and Libya as friendly regimes.

"At least a month before the Iranian acceptance of the ceasefire," notes Ehteshami, "many of the high-ranking politico-religious figures in the republic were endorsing the realist (or pragmatist) line as the best means of confronting Iran's ills." (1995: 17). For these figures, Khomeini's decision to agree unconditionally to the Security Council Resolution 598 ending the war, which he described as "more painful than drinking from a poisoned chalice", signalled the beginning of the shift away from the revisionist policies pursued by the IRI during the preceding decade. In March 1989, months before his death, Khomeini approved Rafsanjani's five-year economic development plan, which allowed Iran to seek foreign loans. Thus, having secured Khomeini's explicit blessing, the Leader-President coalition gradually embarked on a process of economic liberalisation and industrialisation and foreign policy moderation with limited and piecemeal easing of social restrictions.

Economic reconstruction became the top priority for President Rafsanjani, who believed that the regime could not survive without foreign capital, links to international markets and technical expertise. Dubbed the "government of construction" (*dowlat-e sazandegi*), his cabinets were dominated by technocrats, as he emphasised "expertise, technical skills and administrative abilities of the Ministers" over "their 'Islamic virtues' and revolutionary zeal" (Ehteshami 1995: 56). During his first term as president (1989 – 1993), Rafsanjani reopened the Tehran stock exchange and promoted foreign trade through establishing five free trade zones and an export bank, as a result of

which Iran's trade volume soon surpassed the highest pre-revolutionary level.¹²³ His government also encouraged private sector participation in the economy by initiating a process of denationalisation. However, privatisation schemes lacked transparency and a clear legal framework. Benefiting chiefly the *bonyads* and semi-public firms with direct links to the IRGC, or the IRI's ruling clerical oligarchy, they failed to make the state more efficient, while contributing to the growing income disparity in society.

The drive for economic reconstruction and development also necessitated – and brought with it – a more pragmatic foreign policy rhetoric and diplomatic advances to improve (and in quite a few cases, restart) bilateral and regional relations. This effort gained momentum with the Second Gulf War, as Tehran's support for Kuwaiti sovereignty and the US-led military operation against Saddam Hussein presented the Rafsanjani government with the opportunity to mend ties with Gulf Arab countries as well as the West. Its position in the crisis brought Iran benefits that had eluded it during its own war with Iraq: the UN recognised Iraq as the main belligerent of the eight-year war and Baghdad was forced to pay reparations to Tehran and agree to the full implementation of SCR 598 as well as the 1975 Algiers Accord.¹²⁴ At the end of the war, Jordan, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia renewed diplomatic ties with the IRI and new avenues of economic cooperation opened with Western Europe, with France, Germany and Italy once again becoming Iran's major trade partners.

In May 1991, addressing foreign delegates attending the "Conference on Oil and Gas in the 1990s: Prospects for Cooperation" in Tehran – the first high profile international conference organised by the Iranian government since the revolution – Rafsanjani declared Iran was "ready to embark on mutual cooperation with regional and non-regional countries to secure viable peace and stability within the framework of sensible policies." His foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, argued that in the new era economic considerations would overshadow political priorities.¹²⁵ In the same pragmatic vein, Iran chose to side

¹²³ By 1991, the total trade volume had become 3.5 times the pre-revolutionary level (St. Marie and Nagshpour 2011: 134).

¹²⁴ The Algiers Accord ceded to Iran the strategic Shatt al-Arab waterway, which had been a historic source of territorial dispute between the two countries and one of the main causes for the war.

¹²⁵ "Iran Declares Return to World Economy" *Washington Post*, 28 May 1991.

with the newly independent Armenia rather than Muslim Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the early 1990s for fear of ethnic Azeri irredentism at home, and also turned a blind eye to the plight of Muslim minorities in Russia and China in order to maintain positive relations with both states. Calculations of national interest had replaced the universalist slogans of the Islamic revolution.

Economic restructuring and diplomatic normalisation gained speed in the early 1990s in the midst of the post-Cold War international environment where trade liberalisation and free market policies appeared triumphant over economic nationalism and protectionism. We should note, however, that during this period, neither Khamenei nor Rafsanjani seriously contemplated accompanying these shifts in economic and foreign policies with a political reform programme. On the contrary, the institutional architecture of the IRI as it existed after 1989 was their product and they were both determined to preserve it. Relaxations on social restrictions, such as the easing of censorship in the press and the arts, were piecemeal and driven by individual ministers, most notably Mohammad Khatami, the minister of culture and Islamic guidance in the first Rafsanjani cabinet, rather than as part of a systematic government policy. Political reform, which became the key issue of the Khatami presidency, had yet to enter the lexicon of the IRI elites in the early 1990s. Furthermore, as I emphasised in Chapter 4, factional politics during this period was still very much an elite preoccupation, driven by inter-personal relationships and without an organised party machine that would formally organise the masses and link them to the regime elite. Yet it was also during this period that both men came to appreciate fully the critical importance of elections, serving both as a source of popular legitimacy to the regime following the charismatic leader's demise, but also as an unpredictable tool and potential threat to the Islamic pillar.

Thus, even as he praised the IRI's democratic achievements and encouraged the expression of popular will at the ballot box, Rafsanjani collaborated with Khamenei to tighten the guardians' control over the electoral playing field by equipping the Guardian Council with the authority to vet and approve candidates running for office.¹²⁶ This intervention bore its first fruit in

¹²⁶ In early 1993, as he prepared to launch his bid for a second term in office, Rafsanjani praised the IRI's democratic institutions. "During the past 14 years," he said, "the Islamic Republic of Iran

the Majles election in 1992, before which the GC barred more than 1,000 of the 3,150 candidates, mostly from the Islamic left faction, whom the Leader had labelled as 'seditionists' (*fetnehgar*) and called upon the people to refrain from supporting.¹²⁷ As a result, the right came to dominate the Fourth Majles.

However, unlike Khamenei, whose constitutional powers and position did not require periodic reaffirmation by the Iranian public, as the leader of the republican pillar, Rafsanjani was eventually forced to recognise that he needed popular support and could disregard the expectations of the electorate at his own risk. With elections becoming a central mechanism for power distribution among factions in post-Khomeini Iran, Rafsanjani not only worked to marginalise his rivals through the Guardian Council, but also made campaign promises to cater to the popular demand for economic welfare and prosperity and improved standards of living. In this regard, the relatively low turnout in the 1993 presidential election could be seen as an indication of the general dissatisfaction both with the lack of genuine choice (the GC had disqualified 124 of 128 candidates and those who were approved all belonged to the right faction) and the consequences of the Rafsanjani administration's policies. Indeed, by the time his second term neared an end, his economic promises remained largely unfulfilled: bureaucratic reform had not materialised, economic growth was below expectations, inflation and unemployment were still high, and the gap between the rich and the poor had widened (Amuzegar 2001a).

In short, from his second presidential term onwards Rafsanjani had to contend not only with a growing rivalry with the Leader and his supporters but also with the fluctuating popular judgement on his policies and what he came to represent within the IRI establishment. Throughout his presidency and during the first Khatami administration, leftist-turned-reformists frequently attacked Rafsanjani for institutionalising the pervasive culture of corruption and self-

has relied on referenda and the establishment of popular institutions as its main tools. In more than 12 elections with the participation of the people (men and women), the Iranians have elected their governmental system, President and Majles deputies and have ratified their constitution. They have elected in two turns the members of the Assembly of Experts whose duty it is to choose the Leader. The presence of representatives from religious minorities in the Majles with equal rights [is established] ... and the guarantee of this right to the constitution signifies the depth and genuineness of our commitment to democracy." *Ettela'at*, 21 February 1993, quoted in Ehteshami (1995: 72).

¹²⁷ *Ettela'at*, 28 March 1992.

enrichment within the state (Ansari 2006: 59 – 61). During the 2005 presidential election, his populist rival Mahmoud Ahmadinejad successfully painted Rafsanjani as the architect and symbol of the IRI's wealthy and self-serving economic elite. Consequently, his defeat in 2005 was in part a popular expression of discontent with his record in his two terms as president.

The split in the right and Rafsanjani's (temporary) decline

Rafsanjani's fortunes began to decline when his coalition with the Leader began to break apart in the early 1990s. Personal rivalry – namely, Rafsanjani's ambition to be the patrimonial chief executive of political and economic affairs in the IRI, and Khamenei's determination not to remain in Rafsanjani's shadow – goes a long way to explain some of the causes of this split. This personal rivalry was exacerbated by (and in turn exacerbated) the growing division within the right faction over the direction and the purpose of Rafsanjani's economic policies. Rafsanjani believed in the necessity to restructure Iran's traditional *bazaar*-based economy into an industrialised one with modern retail and banking systems. He was supported in this pursuit by the emerging group of technocrats and 'new industrialists', made up of former IRGC officers and influential *bazaar* merchants with personal links to the president, who were incentivised to make the leap to industrial production and benefited from his privatisation schemes. This increasingly wealthy and prominent group – "the mercantile bourgeoisie" – formed the 'modernist' (or the 'pragmatist') wing of the right faction (Ansari 2006: 52 – 79).

The rise of the modernists and the socio-economic worldview associated with them triggered a counter reaction. Members of the unreformed Islamic left attacked Rafsanjani for recreating the comprador bourgeoisie of the Pahlavi era; the so-called 'thousand families' who became wealthy at the expense of the general populace (Ansari 2006: 60). For the bulk of the conservative *bazaar* merchants, who were outside of this new circle, Rafsanjani's policies meant a diversion of funds from their economic activities and a long-term threat to their interests (Keshavarzian 2009). The conservative clergy started to argue that legitimising the pursuit of material wealth was threatening the moral fabric of

society and exposing it dangerously to the western-promoted ideas of liberalism and individualism. The conservative *bazaaris* and the clerics were joined by lay intellectuals and war veterans, who had returned from the frontline not so much with dreams of economic self-enrichment, but an uncompromising view of social morality and justice.

In June 1991, in an open letter to the Leader published in the leading conservative daily *Kayhan*, 35 university professors warned of a “western cultural invasion” (*tahajom-e farhangi-ye gharb*).¹²⁸ Rejecting the popular concepts of the post-Cold War liberal era, such as ‘the new world order’ and ‘the global village’, the academics criticised the programmes pursued by the government for advocating “disloyalty to tradition, family and social values”, encouraging a materialistic and human-centrist view of the world and mocking revolutionary ideals. The letter also claimed that, having failed to defeat the revolution through military force, the West had resorted to exporting cultural degeneration to corrupt it from within.

This argument resonated with Khamenei, who despite having initially sanctioned Rafsanjani’s economic programme, saw both a real threat in the globalisation discourse and an opportunity to strengthen his own position against Rafsanjani by courting the reaction to Rafsanjani’s policies (Arjomand 2009: 179).¹²⁹ The Leader was lacking a sound popular base, and the emergence of a traditionalist coalition of *bazaaris*, clerics and members of the security establishment within the right faction seemed to provide him with one. As Rafsanjani became tied to the economic interests of the IRI’s upper and middle classes, Khamenei refashioned himself as the guardian of its traditional structures and revolutionary values. In return, the traditionalists became the foremost supporters of the Leader and *velayat-e motlaq-e faqih*. Identifying and fighting the West’s cultural onslaught henceforth constituted the focus of the Leader’s pronouncements, which were compiled by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in a single volume titled “Culture and Cultural Invasion”

¹²⁸ *Kayhan*, 27 June 1991.

¹²⁹ In a 1992 address, for example, Khamenei publicly criticised the direction of reconstruction: “The enemy claims that during the period of reconstruction, revolutionary spirit and morality must be put aside,” he said. “Is this the meaning of reconstruction? Surely it is not. [...] If we spend billions on development projects and ignore moral issues in the country, all the achievements will amount to nothing.” *Ettela’at*, 20 October 1992.

(Khamenei 1996). Resisting 'cultural degeneration' associated with western liberalism and globalisation became one of the chief slogans of the traditionalists (and later, the neo-conservatives) from the mid-1990s onwards, just as members of the increasingly marginalised Islamist left faction had started to revise their strict anti-imperialist stance for a programme that was less preoccupied with resisting external enemies and more with reforming the state.

This apparent role reversal between the right and the left reflected the evolving power dynamics within the IRI: having been systematically ousted from the state's decision making mechanism, the left's attention shifted gradually to analysing and transforming that mechanism. The ideologues of the nascent reform movement saw in an active and organised civil society's participation in politics a key to breaking the right's dominance over the institutions of power. In the process, they did not only critically re-engage with Khomeini's formulation of Islamic government within the boundaries of religion and tradition, but also became more receptive towards the post-Cold War debates over democratisation, human rights and the rule of law. Conversely, the traditional right acted with a defensive instinct that sought to preserve its dominant position within the state. The traditionalist guardians of the IRI, like their Turkish counterparts of the same era, perceived an existential challenge in the post-modern liberal utopia of the 1990s to their domestic positions within Iran and Iran's sovereignty within the international order. Their increasingly vocal claim to preserving the nation's morality and the regime's institutional integrity was decidedly 'modern' and once again demonstrated Iran's return to the nation-state rationale after a decade of experimentation with Khomeini's revolutionary Islamic utopia.

Within the right faction, the emerging battle line between the traditionalists and the modernists became visible following the Fourth Majles election in 1992, from which the traditionalists emerged as the dominant faction. Shortly afterwards, Rafsanjani was forced to drop his 'liberal' or reform-minded ministers, namely Khatami, the Minister of Interior Abdollah Nuri and the Minister of Higher Education and Culture Mostafa Moin. Having resigned shortly before the Majles election, Khatami was temporarily replaced by Ali Larijani and then, after the election, by Mostafa Mir Salim, both traditionalists with strong ties

to the Leader. As the new culture minister, Mir Salim quickly set out to resist the 'cultural invasion' by rolling back the relaxations on press censorship and artistic expression granted under Khatami (Moslem 2002: 221 – 224). Shortly after being appointed by the conservative-dominated Majles as its new speaker, Ali Akbar Nateq Nuri set the tone of the new legislative term by associating Rafsanjani's platform with liberalism, which he defined as a menace that had to be eradicated, arguing "the building of a few roads and bridges and the completion of some development projects is not the same as upholding the values of the revolution."¹³⁰

With his second term effectively paralysed by the traditionalist Majles, Rafsanjani found it increasingly difficult to pursue his economic agenda. Added to this was the frustration of facing an unsympathetic counterpart in the US, who refused to reciprocate his government's politically risky overtures signalling a desire for gradual improvement of trade and diplomatic relations between the two countries. In 1995, the Clinton administration did not only block a major oil contract that Iran had awarded to the US firm Conoco, but also went on to impose on the Islamic Republic the most extensive economic sanctions yet with the Iran Libya Sanctions Act.¹³¹ Washington's hostile approach towards Iran shook the tenuous political ground on which Rafsanjani had to pursue his politics of normalisation at home, and also emboldened the traditionalists' conviction of the US as an ill-intentioned and untrustworthy counterpart, rendering future advances for rapprochement even more risky.¹³²

It was under these circumstances that several of Rafsanjani's senior political allies established the Executives of the Construction of Iran Party (*Hezb-e Kargozaran-e Sazandegi-ye Iran*, henceforth *Kargozaran*) in 1996. For the traditionalists, *Kargozaran*'s convergence with disillusioned former leftists and its declaration that economic development was a greater priority than "strengthening the value of the revolution and the regime" presented a direct

¹³⁰ *Iran*, 31 March 1996, quoted in Takeyh (2009: 125).

¹³¹ "When Iran Hedges Closer, US Pushes Away", *Christian Science Monitor*, 7 April 1995, and Breckenridge (2000).

¹³² In a 2012 interview, Rafsanjani recalled the constraints and frustrations he faced both at home and abroad in the foreign policy arena during his presidency: "I wanted to re-establish relations with Egypt, but I could not. I wanted to begin negotiations with America, based on the terms I had set, but I could not. Could not is not the same as did not want to." (Editorial 2012).

affront to the regime.¹³³ When his supporters' last ditch attempt to keep Rafsanjani in power by amending the constitution to allow a third term as president failed, Rafsanjani and the *Kargozaran* threw their support behind Khatami's campaign for the 1997 presidential election.¹³⁴ Thus, the intensification of factional rivalries among the IRI elite during the Rafsanjani presidency spilled into the realm of popular politics towards the end of his term, as those groups that had lost varying degrees of power at the hands of the traditionalists – namely the modernist right and the leftists-turned-reformists – sought avenues to strengthen their political positions.

Ultimately, the institutional imbalance between the Leader and the president had a decisive impact on the outcome of the power struggle between the two during the presidency of Rafsanjani. It is easier to argue with hindsight that “it was difficult for Khamenei not to win” given the institutional arrangement following the constitutional amendments of 1989, which heavily favoured his office over the presidency (Arjomand 2009: 37). Yet we should remember that at the outset of the ‘duumvirate’, many observers, including the president himself, had expected Rafsanjani, with his political skills, seemingly endless energy and extensive personal ties within the regime's intricate web of elite groups and factions, to overshadow Khamenei, who was short of charisma, religious credentials and a popular base. In the end, Khamenei's ambition and ability to overcome his various shortcomings, combined with his post-1989 institutional powers, led to his rise as the most powerful figure in the IRI, proving the early calculations wrong.

Finally, we should note that the competition between Khamenei and Rafsanjani – and the latter's active participation in the IRI political scene – did not come to an end when Rafsanjani left the presidency. As we will see in the following pages, with his extensive personal and economic connections and status as the head of the Expediency Council, Rafsanjani remained an influential player and a key powerbroker, displaying a remarkable ability to survive astute

¹³³ *Ya Lesarat al-Hosseini*, a weekly journal of the Ansar-e Hezbollah, warned that the declaration “amounts to the death of the revolution as well as of Islamic values.” *Ya Lesarat al-Hosseini*, 10 February 1996, quoted in Rajaei (2007: 168).

¹³⁴ Put forth by Rafsanjani's Deputy President Ata'ollah Mohajerani and Chief of Staff Hossein Marashi, the proposal was vehemently opposed by the traditionalists, “politely rejected” by the reformists and ultimately dismissed by Khamenei. See Moslem (2002: 240, 241).

political challenges, often by shifting alliances between traditionalists and reformists. Indeed, both his presidency and subsequent political career serve as a clear demonstration of the personal nature of politics in the IRI, specifically, the persistent emphasis on individual leadership and the complex web of connections within a relatively closed group of revolutionary elites.

Politics of reform: The Khatami presidency

The intellectual discourse of reform

To repeat the initial observation of this chapter, all three presidents that were elected after the death of Khomeini clashed with and ultimately lost to Khamenei. This suggests both an inherent tension between the dual pillars of the Iranian hybrid regime and also an imbalance of power between these pillars that favours the Islamic pillar. This tension and imbalance was the central issue of the Khatami presidency. I noted above that the critical reappraisal of the *velayat-e faqih* system had already started in earnest during the early 1990s as part of the intellectual evolution of the left. The criticisms that formed the core of the reform movement's intellectual discourse were important because they came from within the system – from theologians, philosophers and political activists who had supported the revolution and were a part of the regime during its first decade and thus implicitly claimed a 'license' to evaluate it in the absence of the system's founder. For this reason, they presented an acute ideological challenge to the traditionalist interpretation of the institutional architecture of the IRI and promises of the revolution.

The beginning of the reform movement can be traced to the emergence in 1991 of *Kiyan*, the foremost religious intellectual journal of the decade, which provided a platform for debate among influential philosophers like Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari and Mohsen Kadivar. *Kiyan* itself was a continuation of *Kayhan-e Farhangi*, the first major monthly journal on culture, literature and philosophy in the IRI, which was banned in 1990 for publishing a series provocative articles written by Abdolkarim Soroush, titled "The

Theoretical Contraction and Expansion of Religious Knowledge". Educated in Tehran and London, Soroush was a supporter of Khomeini in the 1970s and upon his return to Iran after the revolution, served at the seven-member committee overseeing the implementation of Khomeini's Cultural Revolution.

In his "Theory of Contraction and Expansion", which forms the basis of his philosophy as well as that of religious revivalism in post-Khomeini Iran, Soroush (1994) tackled the dilemma of change and perfection (immutability) in religion. Stressing the impossibility of grasping the totality of religion (*din*), Soroush instead argued that "religious knowledge" (*marifat-e dini*) is a form of human knowledge; sincere, but fallible and therefore subject to change (Sadri 2001: 259). He was therefore critical of the presentation of religious knowledge as sacred and absolute (1994: 206 – 208). Building on this premise, Soroush claimed that Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) constitutes only one aspect of religious knowledge and cannot singularly provide the basis of "just government" (1995: 28). Identifying justice as a "metareligious concept",¹³⁵ he holds that for a modern administration to be just, it has to derive its sources both from within religion, including *kalam* (discursive theology) and *akhlaq* (ethics) alongside *fiqh*, and from without, i.e. modern sciences and secular knowledge (1993: 52; 1995), ultimately making the case for "religious democracy" that is based on pluralism, human rights and the rejection of dogma (1996; 2000: 131 – 155).

While Soroush argued that religious knowledge was variable, Shabestari's main contribution to the debate was his emphasis on the essentially limited nature of religious knowledge and the need to seek extra-religious (secular) sources to complement it (Shabestari 1995). As a *mojtahed* who, by his own admission, works strictly within the boundaries of Islamic tradition, Shabestari presented a religious case for separating the divine from the worldly and challenged the legitimate authority of absolute guardianship.¹³⁶ But if

¹³⁵ See "Bavar-e dini, Davar-e dini" in Soroush (1993), and "Tolerance and Governance: A Discourse on Religion and Democracy" in Soroush (2000: 132).

¹³⁶ "Throughout history, the role of prophets has been that of a messenger not of a ruler [...] The issue of man's sovereignty over himself is in one aspect an ontological matter. In another aspect it is related to history and the philosophy of history. In a third aspect, it is a discursive matter connected to theology. Those who interpret the Quranic verse 'God is the only one fit to judge' (*Enel hokm ella lellah*) literally as if only God had the right to rule but that he delegated this right to some people or community do not take into account all three aspects of the issue." *Aban*, 16 April 2000, No. 121, p. 4. For his views on secularism, see Shabestari (1998).

Shabestari's critiques were indirect and non-confrontational in style, Mohsen Kadivar, who is also a *mojtahed*, took on Khomeini's formulation of the absolute guardianship of the jurispudent directly and refuted it openly from the perspective of *fiqh*. In *Government by Mandate*, the second volume of his seminal trilogy on political theology, Kadivar launched "a frontal and unabashed attack" on Khomeini's theory, concluding that it is "neither intuitively obvious, nor rationally necessary":

It is neither a requirement of religion, nor a necessity for denomination (*mazhab*). It is neither a part of the general principles of Shiism (*osoul*), nor a component of detailed observances (*forou*). It is, by near consensus of Shiite *ulama*, nothing more than a jurisprudential minor hypothesis and its proof is contingent upon reasons adduced from the four categories of Quran, Traditions, Consensus and Reason. (Kadivar 1999: 235; quoted in Sadri 2001: 265)

Besides such philosophical challenges, overtly political criticisms of the system and the Leader by dissident clerics, lay intellectuals and political activists became more vocal and commonplace following Khatami's election. In November 1997, Grand Ayatollah Ahmad Azari-Qomi published an open letter blaming Khamenei for sanctioning extra-judicial killings and torture and the pervasive culture of corruption and moral decadence within the regime. He went on to propose dividing the leadership into two departments, with Khamenei being responsible for political affairs and Grand Ayatollah Montazeri for religious affairs.¹³⁷ For his part, Montazeri openly questioned the constitutionality of Khamenei's extensive authority, arguing that it should be limited to a supervisory role, and criticised the GC's interference in elections.¹³⁸ Former IRGC officer-turned-dissident journalist Akbar Ganji was more blunt and provocative. In a public lecture shortly after Khatami's election, Ganji labelled the traditionalist supporters of the regime "totalitarian Islamo-fascists".¹³⁹

It is important to stress that Khatami typically disapproved of the tone and the openness of the criticisms and attacks levied against the regime and the

¹³⁷ "Name-ye Azari-Qomi be jame-ye modaresin", *Rahesabz*, 3 August 2013, <http://www.rahesabz.net/story/73767/>

¹³⁸ "Montazeri: Khamenei should have supervisory role", *Reuters*, 19 November 1997

¹³⁹ Ganji was subsequently prosecuted and jailed for three months on the basis of his speech.

Leader. Instead, he opted for a less confrontational approach that emphasised the loyalty of the reform movement to *velayet-e faqih* and the legacy of Khomeini.¹⁴⁰ Frequently stressing Khomeini's support for republicanism and mass participation in politics, Khatami worked to present the goals of the reform movement – emphasised as establishing rule of law, strengthening civil society (*jame'e-ye madani*) and defining the limits of the "guardianship society" (*jame'e-ye velai*) – as necessary for the fulfilment of the charismatic leader's vision and the promises of the revolution. He summarised these goals in his inaugural speech in the following words: "Establishment of the rule of law is an Islamic, revolutionary and national obligation, and an absolute imperative, which requires a conducive and enabling environment as well as a legal means and instruments coupled with public involvement and assistance." (Khatami 1997: 81)¹⁴¹

Shakibi notes that Khatami's position regarding the power and the responsibilities of the Leader remained ambiguous throughout his presidency: "His public stance indicated support for the broad supervisory role that permits intervention on decisive and politically paralysing issues in the hope that the Leader would support those positions on which Khatami and the proponents of politics of change were attached given their electoral success. Yet, the practical consequences of his rhetoric and programme would result in a Leadership position similar to that propagated by Montazeri." (2010: 308). This ambiguity may have been a result of Khatami's expressed faith in the hybrid system as formulated by Khomeini; that ultimately the Islamic and republican pillars could co-exist and work in a harmonious fashion. For this, he believed, the constitution had to be fully implemented and the institutions of guardianship had to accept willingly institutional checks on their existing prerogatives, which, unsurprisingly, they did not.

¹⁴⁰ This view apparently predated Khatami's election. In the words of Abdolkarim Soroush, "I remember that Mr Khatami was culture minister at the time or he was the head of the Kayhan Institute. He criticized some of *Kayhan Farhangi's* methods; quite fierce criticism. I know that Mr. Rokhsefat [one of the founders of *Kayhan Farhangi*] and Mr. Khatami had some heated arguments." Official website of Abdolkarim Soroush, <http://www.dr.soroush.com/English/Interviews/E-INT-Kian.html>

¹⁴¹ Note the inclusion of 'the national' alongside 'Islamic' and 'revolutionary' in this formulation, which can be seen as another subtle indication of a return from Islamic revolutionary universalism to nation-state rationale.

Khatami wanted to reform the IRI from within and above without breaking the system (Arjomand 2009: 92). In other words, while he did dare to initiate the Iranian *perestroika*, he did not wish to go down in history as Iran's Gorbachev; the man responsible for the collapse of the system that he tried to improve. At those critical junctures when he suspected that the forces unleashed by the politics of change would challenge the core institution of the regime – *velayat-e faqih* – he consistently refrained from confronting the guardians, which ultimately sealed the fate of the reform movement.

The reformist surge and the traditionalist backlash

By the mid-1990s, as the Rafsanjani administration was grappling with the complexities of economic development, a growing number of observers inside and outside Iran noticed the increasing societal restlessness caused by the lack of political reforms.¹⁴² It was indeed this overwhelming demand for political change, expressed primarily by the country's growing urban middle and lower-middle classes, youth population and women, that carried Khatami into office in 1997 with an unprecedented popular mandate. Despite the existing signs, the outcome took the traditionalist guardians by complete surprise: Khatami's convincing defeat of Nateq-Nuri (70% against 25% of the vote) despite the Leader's presumed support for the latter was compounded by the high turnout of 80% (up 30% from the previous election). The impact of the reformist victory and the extent of the desire for change soon became apparent as Khatami's call for popular participation in politics found spirited response in increased civil society activism. NGOs began to emerge in large numbers and student movements were mobilised into vocal advocacy and political pressure groups (Mashayekhi 2001).¹⁴³ Under Culture Minister Ata'ollah Mohajerani (former

¹⁴² One of these observers, Ehteshami noted: "The Rafsanjani government [...] has been reluctant to legalise channels of political opposition, content with the belief that if economic channels of self-expression exist the need for political reform diminishes. The emergence of new class factions at the ruler level, or a return of the old ones, will, however, increase pressures for political reform. Indeed, if economic reform does not bear fruit, then pressure for change at the political level may become overwhelming." (1995: 124)

¹⁴³ In the words of one student movement leader, "the fundamental role of the student movement is to critique power. The student movement is not a political party, an institution, or a political

deputy president to Rafsanjani and one of the founders of *Kargozaran*), reformist newspapers and journals proliferated, sharply criticising and thoroughly challenging official viewpoints represented in the traditionalist-controlled TV and radio.¹⁴⁴

Riding on the back of this popular wave, the reformists swept the local council elections held in February 1999 and the Majles elections in February and May 2000. The 1999 elections for city, district and village councils were particularly significant as they were the first to be organised in the IRI despite being stipulated in the 1979 Constitution. Also notable was the fact that a parliamentary commission had handled the vetting of candidates, instead of the GC. With this election, the authority of appointing town mayors was transferred from the interior ministry to elected councils. As such, the local elections symbolised a key step towards realising Khatami's vision of grassroots participation in political decision-making (Akbari and Aganji 2013).¹⁴⁵ "With the implementation of the provision on municipal councils," he declared, "the people will be given the opportunity to restore their rights. [This] will help remove the chronic mentality of law breaking."¹⁴⁶

Following on the success of the local elections, the victory in the elections for the Sixth Majles, which gave the reformist Participation Front (*Moshakerat*) 189 of the 290 seats (as opposed to 54 for the traditionalist Society of the Militant Clergy and 42 for *Kargozaran*), appeared at the time as a turning point for the balance of power among rival factions, and potentially, between the two pillars of the IRI hybrid regime. It was not to be. Notably, the reformists were denied the veto-busting two-thirds majority they looked to have secured after the Guardian Council strategically annulled a number of reformist victories in provinces where "potential for unrest was low" or easily containable (Shakibi 2010: 309). This signalled the beginning of an intensified backlash by the traditionalist guardians, who regarded the reformist surge as an internal *coup*

actor; on the contrary, it is the antithesis of such powers. Its objective is to mobilise for democracy and human rights, and to reform power." Quoted in Bayat (2007: 108).

¹⁴⁴ "Print media triumphs in Iranian elections", *BBC World Monitoring*, 21 February 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/monitoring/media_reports/651194.stm

¹⁴⁵ *Ettela'at*, 19 April 1999.

¹⁴⁶ "Iran prepares for first-ever local elections", *BBC World Monitoring*, 10 February 1999, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/monitoring/276816.stm>

d'état and realised the existing filters of the electoral system had failed to block it.

Let us remember at this point that the reformists were already facing growing resistance, obstruction and intimidation from their opponents in the guardianship institutions, since the traditionalists had shaken off their initial surprise at the outcome of the 1997 presidential election. Like Khatami, the Leader and his traditionalist supporters had also learned from the experience of Gorbachev and the Soviet *perestroika* the dangers of opening up the political system to accommodate wider opposition, and they were determined to resist. Consequently, while Khatami was focusing his energies on mobilising the masses for increased political participation, the Leader simply put his weight behind strengthening his personal tutelage over key state institutions through strategic appointments and representatives. The institution that emerged as the vanguard of the resistance to the reformists during Khatami's first term was the judiciary. Politicised courts, populated by former Ministry of Intelligence and Security interrogators recruited by the head of the judiciary, Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, since the mid-1990s, took upon themselves the task of suppressing the reformist press and harassing the leading reformists (Takeyh 2009: 190).

Within a few years, many of the hundreds of newspapers that had opened after 1997 were banned. Montazeri was placed under house arrest shortly after challenging Khamenei. In February 1998, the Special Court of the Clergy sentenced former Tehran mayor and *Kargozaran* founder Gholamhossein Karbaschi to two years in prison on corruption charges. In April 1999, in a trial that attracted considerable international attention, the same court sentenced Mohsen Kadivar to 18 months in prison for spreading propaganda against the regime.¹⁴⁷ In November, Abdollah Nuri was found guilty of insulting Ayatollah Khomeini. The attempt to suppress and intimidate the movement took a violent turn with the physical attacks and harassment of pro-reform students, activists and clerics by state-backed vigilante groups, as well as the murders of outspoken

¹⁴⁷ Ironically, Kadivar was arrested not for his theological works but for a sermon in which he criticised the guardians for involvement in political assassination of dissidents. For the text of Kadivar's defense see Kadivar (1999).

artists and intellectuals.¹⁴⁸ The investigation and the ensuing trial of the intelligence agents, whose involvement in a spate of high-profile killings in late 1998 was admitted to by regime officials after sustained public pressure, were watered down and failed to disclose the full extent of senior officials' involvement in the murders.¹⁴⁹ The assassination attempt that permanently disabled Saeed Hajjarian, who had worked to uncover the murders, shortly after the Majles election in 2000, was a clear message that those behind the campaign of intimidation were not daunted by the judicial process.

The perpetrators of these acts took courage from hardliner traditionalist clerics who openly sanctioned the use of violence against the opposition. Most notably, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi declared that the enemies of Islam "present principles such as tolerance and compromise as absolute values while violence is regarded as a non-value. [...] The taboo that every act of violence is bad and every act of tolerance is good must be broken."¹⁵⁰ They would also be encouraged by the fact that the Leader himself did not explicitly denounce violence.¹⁵¹ For his part, aside from expressing his support for the victims of violence and condemning its perpetrators, Khatami was neither able to prevent these attacks from occurring, nor ensure that the trials were conducted in a just and transparent manner. In the absence of an organised party structure and meaningful support from inside the regime, Khatami's faith in the ability of loosely coordinated civil society activism to instigate change appeared increasingly misplaced and excessive.

¹⁴⁸ State-sanctioned assassinations targeting non-conformist individuals took place throughout the 1990s, resulting in "a massive emigration of the Iranian intelligentsia and the death of nearly 100 people connected with art, letters, and literature." (Rajaei 2007: 170 – 171). The assassinations reached a climax in late 1998. In November, political dissidents Dariush and Pervaneh Forouhar were murdered in their home, while dissident journalist Majid Sharif and editor Pirouz Davani 'disappeared' after being abducted by plainclothes intelligence agents. The following month saw the assassinations of authors Mohammad Jafar Pouyandeh and Mohammad Mokhtari.

¹⁴⁹ "Iranian journalist names names", *BBC News*, 30 November 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1048502.stm; "'Cover-up' in Iran murder trial", *BBC News*, 7 January 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1105447.stm; "Iranian killers spared death penalty", *BBC News*, 29 January 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2704023.stm.

¹⁵⁰ *Kayhan*, 5 August 1999.

¹⁵¹ Intervening in the debate, Khamenei essentially stated that violence, when used by the state, was "good and necessary", but "bad, ugly and criminal" when used by non-state actors. *IRNA*, 21 April 2000, cited in Shakibi (2010: 323).

Against Hajjarian's consistent advice to push for permanent institutional reform while the traditionalists had yet to figure out an effective strategy to thwart the reformist challenge, Khatami was reluctant to confront the traditionalist guardians openly. In August 2000, he missed an important opportunity to start a debate to define the limits of the Leader's authority, when Khamenei took advantage of the legal ambiguity surrounding his powers to issue a governmental decree (*hokm-e hokumati*) ordering the newly formed Majles to stop deliberating a new press law. A failed initiative in early 1999 to make the *bonyads* answerable to the Ministry of Finance was the only (rather timid) attempt at structural reform during Khatami's first term. By the time he finally came to accept in his second term that some confrontation was unavoidable and perhaps necessary, he was already facing a united guardianship front determined to contain the threat posed by the reformist-dominated republican pillar.

As the threat from the reformist camp increased, the Guardian Council, with the Leader's blessing, came to fulfil its role as the first line of defence against the bills proposed by the reformist Majles. But it was the Expediency Council, tasked with mediating disputes between the GC and the Majles, which served as the institution that ultimately tipped the scale against the reformists by siding with the GC at every critical juncture. At the head of the EC was Rafsanjani, who in the early 2000s had once again switched sides to cooperate with the traditionalists, after facing scathing personal attacks and criticisms from the reformists. Khatami did not approve of these attacks but nor did he attempt to contain them until Rafsanjani had moved toward the traditionalist camp. With the EC's support, the GC successfully struck down two major bills aimed at shifting the balance of power in the republican pillar's favour. Introduced in September 2002, the first of the 'twin bills' was attempted to roll back the supervisory powers that the Guardian Council had assumed after 1991. The second bill was intended to enhance the president's authority as the protector of the constitution on the basis of the Article 113.

Following the bills' rejection, some reformists suggested that the president resign in protest and as a tactical push for national referendum. In response, Rahim Safavi, commander of the IRGC issued a thinly veiled threat of

violent reprisal.¹⁵² Withdrawing the bills from the parliament in April 2004, Khatami wrote a letter expressing dashed hopes of reform and frustration at the recalcitrance of the Guardian Council.¹⁵³ The letter was remarkable not so much as an admission of defeat, which had become fairly clear by that point, but rather as an example of Khatami's unrealistic expectation, maintained until very late, that the guardians would willingly give up their power.

The loss of hope among the reformists translated into political apathy and dwindling participation, depriving Khatami of the movement's most valued asset. The first electoral defeat came in the local elections of 2003, in which many reformist councillors were replaced by traditionalists as well as members of the emerging neo-conservative faction, such as Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who became the mayor of Tehran. In January 2004, in the run up to the elections for the Seventh Majles, the GC disqualified 3,600 out of nearly 8,200 candidates, including 80 sitting reformist MPs. With an expanded budget approved by the EC, the GC was able to employ thousands of 'investigators' to produce incriminatory evidence against potential candidates; a capability it had lacked in 2000 (Ehsani 2004). Khatami once again refrained from challenging the guardians when he failed to support the 123 reformist MPs, who had threatened to resign in protest and demanded rescheduling the elections. Acquiescing to the Leader's wishes, Khatami "had unwillingly become complicit in the emasculation of the republican part of the IRI" (Shakibi 2010: 318). The subsequent defeat in the Majles election was followed by the presidential election in June 2005, which large portions of the thoroughly demoralised reformist base preferred to boycott, instead of voting for Rafsanjani or his populist neo-conservative rival.

Behind the defeat: structure and agency

In explaining the defeat of the reform movement, the institutional obstructions machinated by the traditionalist guardians outlined above loom large. But also important were the dynamics related to the wider context in which the reformists had to operate as well as the agency of Khatami-as-leader. The

¹⁵² "Iran's long power struggle nears climax", *Financial Times*, 2 November 2002.

¹⁵³ *Ettela'at*, 13 April 2004.

international environment in the late 1990s and the early 2000s did not facilitate Khatami's reform attempts. Given oil's predominance in the Iranian economy, the historical lows in petroleum prices experienced during Khatami's presidency forced the reformists to work with a contracted budget. As fallout from the slowdown in the world economy and especially the Asian financial crisis, Iran's oil export revenues fell by nearly 20% and non-oil exports by 7% during 1997/98 (Amuzegar 2001b).

Despite some success in taming runaway inflation, managing an average annual growth of 5.6% between 2001 and 2005 and starting a programme of diversification from oil, the economic performance of the Khatami presidency was altogether underwhelming. Unemployment, partly a result of population growth, and underemployment remained high. The working class saw little tangible improvement in their lot. Khatami's economic programme remained ambiguous, especially during his first term, due largely to the necessity of balancing between his liberal and statist supporters. The emphasis on economic liberalism during his second term did not make the government particularly popular among the working class. Ultimately, economic policies were overshadowed by the overriding rhetoric of political change. Although promoting social justice was articulated as one of the Participation Front's goals, it did not constitute a major policy area or a prominent rhetorical point (Behdad 2001; Askari 2004). Preoccupied with the philosophy of political change, the reformist leadership appeared distant to the day-to-day economic struggles of the country's urban working class and rural population. This was a strategic failure that resulted in the limitation of the movement's core base to the urban middle class. Putting social justice at the centre of his platform, Ahmadinejad was able to garner support from those classes that felt disenfranchised under both Rafsanjani and Khatami.

In foreign affairs, Khatami's policy of gradual rapprochement with the West, especially the US, met periodic resistance from the traditionalists at home and was left largely unreciprocated by Washington. Holding foreign policy firmly in his exclusive domain, the Leader provided Khatami with a degree of autonomy at the beginning of his first term, taking credit for his fleeting achievements and capitalising on his failures in due course. Despite the extensive intelligence

sharing and strategic cooperation between the US and Iran after the 11 September 2001 attacks and during the US invasion of Afghanistan, Iran's classification as part of an "axis of evil" by US President George W. Bush in February 2002 undermined Khatami's position both at home and abroad (Parsi 2007: 202 – 237). The 2003 US occupation of Iraq freed Iran of a historical rival in Saddam Hussein and inadvertently exposed Iraq to greater Iranian influence, which benefited mostly Khatami's successor. But the heavy presence of US troops surrounding Iran became a cause for alarm for the regime.¹⁵⁴ The heightened militaristic rhetoric against the Islamic Republic from the US and Israel during this period, despite Iran's move to temporarily halt its uranium enrichment programme in 2003, undermined Khatami's policy of reconciliation, culminating in Ahmadinejad's policy of confrontation.

Khatami preached 'dialogue among civilisations' at a time when the hegemonic foreign policy rhetoric in the West was shaped by the clash of civilisations discourse and the dichotomous worldview of the American neo-conservatives that assigned to the US an enlightening mission in the Middle East.¹⁵⁵ As I argued in Chapter 1, the Bush administration's attempts to justify military occupations in the region through the rhetoric of liberty and democracy were detrimental to the legitimacy of local struggles for democracy and civil rights across the region. Moreover, the spread of pro-western 'colour revolutions' in the former Soviet republics gave the traditionalist guardians in the IRI an extra cause for caution and resistance to Khatami's reform agenda. The Leader, IRGC commanders and the traditionalist clergy frequently spoke of the need to remain vigilant against foreign-backed initiatives, which Khamenei referred to as "soft overthrow" (*barandazi-ye narm*) (Arjomand 2009: 178). It was also in this light that the traditionalist guardians viewed and responded to the popular support expressed for the 'Green Movement' and the mass demonstrations that followed the presidential election in June 2009.

Despite all the economic, geopolitical and institutional woes that the reformists had to contend with, it appears in hindsight that events would have

¹⁵⁴ Shortly after the US invasion, former IRGC chief Mohsen Rezai expressed the widely held opinion that "any action against Iraq is a prelude to one against Iran." *IRNA*, 16 April 2003; quoted in Takeyh 2009: 217).

¹⁵⁵ For one notable and highly influential example, see Lewis (2002).

taken a different turn had Khatami chosen not to retreat against his more determined opponents at each of the several critical junctures that he faced as president. As early as in 1999, at the height of the student protests that were triggered by the closure of the *Salam* newspaper and had quickly spread across all the major Iranian cities, one of the popular slogans alongside “Freedom of thought, always, always” and “Khamenei must go!” (which was also a first) was “Khatami, where are you?” Unable to control the slogans and the demands of the protestors, and in fear of being responsible for throwing the country into anarchy, the reformist leadership had chosen not to stand behind the students, even as they were being attacked by the *Hezbollahi* vigilantes and the *Basij* militia. During a heated exchange in a ceremony marking the student day at the University of Tehran in December 2004, students angry with Khatami’s failure to stand up for the thousands of reformist candidates banned from the Seventh Majles elections chanted “Khatami, Khatami, shame on you!” and “Incompetent Khatami”. In response, the beleaguered president admitted:

If I retreated, I retreated against the system I believed in. I considered necessary saving the system. [...] Either we had to hold the elections or face riots. [...] I didn't consider it in the country's interests that riots erupt.¹⁵⁶

In the end, Khatami’s fear of civil strife and institutional collapse of the hybrid regime led him to grudgingly accept the systematic suppression of the republican pillar by the guardians. Some observers pointed out that this fear was exaggerated and manipulated by the traditionalists. Writing during the standoff over the disqualification of reformist candidates by the GC in January 2004, Ansari suggested that the proponents of change should resist the temptation to compromise and make good on their threat to resign en masse: “Only this way can they potentially re-energise a public hungry for genuine, decisive leadership. In short, they will have to call the hardliners' bluff, by ignoring the much over-used threat that confrontation could lead to the disintegration of the Iranian state through civil strife.” (Ansari 2004).

¹⁵⁶ “Students heckle Iranian president”, *BBC News*, 6 December 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4072887.stm.

By this time, however, many former supporters of the president had given up not only on Khatami but also, on the possibility of reform from within the system. Boycotting the Majles election, the main student organisation, *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*, argued: “Unless elections lead to systematic and fundamental change they will only legitimise autocracy. [...] The constitution of the Islamic Republic in its present form, with institutions such as the Guardian Council, the Expediency Council and [the office of] the Leader leaves no further room for democratisation.” (Ehsani 2004). In an open letter titled “The Tragedy of Khatami”, jailed dissident Hashem Aghajari warned about the possible collapse of the hybrid regime:

In a very short period of time, the democratic face of the Iranian constitution is going to be turned into an autocratic face. [...] Alongside this comical repetition of history we are also witnessing a tragedy: the tragedy of Khatami. [...] During the six years that have elapsed for the reformist government and the four years of the reformist parliament, because of a lack of will and courage great opportunities were missed.¹⁵⁷

Politics of populism: The Ahmadinejad presidency

Mesbah Yazdi and the neo-conservative project

Despite being effectively outmanoeuvred by the Leader and the traditionalists, during the eight years of Khatami presidency, the reformists demonstrated that a popular movement could pose a significant threat to the guardians and the *velayet-e faqih* system by gaining control of the republican institutions. The reformists were defeated, but not without incurring considerable damage on the guardians, whose increasingly blatant meddling in the electoral and legislative processes brought the democratic legitimacy and the feasibility of the hybrid system under more critical scrutiny. On balance, the instability caused by

¹⁵⁷ ISNA, 13 February 2004; “Iranian dissident says reforms at an end”, *Al Jazeera English*, 15 February 2004, <http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/02/2008410162841593824.html>.

sustained conflict between the two pillars did not seem to benefit the guardians. Thus, towards the end of Khatami's second term the traditionalist guardians had set out to look for a successor to Khatami, who could both compete in popular politics and also remain loyal to the Leader.

The most resourceful of these guardians was the hardliner Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi. A founder of the influential Haqqani seminary in Qom (along with his ally Ahmad Jannati, the head of the Guardian Council), Mesbah Yazdi was one of the fiercest critics of the drive for political reform and pluralism under Khatami.¹⁵⁸ A firm believer in the absolute guardianship of the jurisprudent, he has claimed that the Leader derives his legitimacy directly from the Twelfth Imam and chooses to delegate some of this divine authority to the people.¹⁵⁹ People, according to Mesbah Yazdi, play no role in legitimising the political system:

In our view, the validity of the laws enacted in the Islamic Republic of Iran stems from the orders and the signature of the *vali-ye fiqh*. Without his approval, a matter has no validity. [...] Had he not signed it, [the constitution] would have been null. Even if everyone had voted for it, it would have no legal or religious validity. [...] [Imam] orders you to vote and elect a president; presidential elections derive their validity from his will. He saw it expedient in the current conditions for people to vote.¹⁶⁰

Mesbah Yazdi openly declared his opposition to the institutional division of powers in the IRI, arguing that Islamic jurisprudence entitled the Leader to control all three branches of government: the executive, legislative and the judiciary.¹⁶¹ In his worldview, the conflict between the two pillars of the hybrid system had to be resolved in favour of the appointed guardians (2006: 160 – 161; Rahnema 2011: 91). Although seeing the electoral institutions as a theoretical nuisance, Mesbah Yazdi was also aware of the practical importance of

¹⁵⁸ Rejecting the Participation Front's slogan "Iran for all Iranians", Mesbah Yazdi retorted: "What does this slogan mean? Muslims are Iranians, but so are Baha'is. Does this mean Baha'is have the right to govern as well? [...] It is the wish of the United States to have Baha'ism recognised as an official religion. [...] The slogan 'Iran for all Iranians' is a ploy to bring minority religions into government." Speech, 5 June 2001; in San'ati (2008: 734).

¹⁵⁹ *Resalat*, 6 October 1998

¹⁶⁰ *Part-o Sokhan*, 28 December 2005

¹⁶¹ Speech titled "Velayat-e faqih va Khobregan", 15 March 2006, Official website of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, <http://www.mesbahyazdi.org/farsi/speeches/lectures/lectures21.htm>

popular politics and the necessity to devise more subtle and effective methods of controlling public opinion. His formula entailed promoting a populist counter-narrative to the reformist discourse based on a sense of public nostalgia for the moral purity and the religious fervour of the martyrs of the revolution, a spirit embodied in the veterans of the war with Iraq and especially the *Basij* militia.

This narrative was embodied by the neo-conservative faction that had emerged in the mid-1990s and grew in prominence towards the end of Khatami's presidency. This faction consisted mainly of non-clerical second generation revolutionaries and particularly veterans of the war with Iraq, who became active within the security and intelligence sectors during the 1990s. Their worldview combined the Islamic left's social justice-based economic agenda and anti-imperialist stance in foreign policy with the traditionalists' strict views on religious morality and defence of traditional jurisprudence (Ehteshami and Zweiri 2007). A representative of this faction, a former member of the *Basij* and the mayor of Tehran since 2003, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad seemed to fit the bill of a true loyalist and a sincere populist. He had become a follower of Mesbah Yazdi's ideas in the early 2000s as the two shared a millenarian belief in the imminent return of the Hidden Imam. Mesbah Yazdi was the only high profile cleric to endorse Ahmadinejad openly at a time when few people gave the little known mayor much chance in the 2005 election. Encouraging his followers to support the young and eccentric candidate, he declared that participating in the elections was a religious duty. Pointing at the Rafsanjani and Khatami administrations, he said, "we have not had an Islamic government yet, but we would like to have that government now and that means we cannot afford not voting." (San'ati 2008: 858)

Ahmadinejad's second place showing in the first round, behind Rafsanjani and just ahead of reformist former Majles speaker Mehdi Karroubi, and his victory over Rafsanjani in the second round were therefore a surprise to many Iranians and foreign observers alike, but not so much to Mesbah Yazdi.¹⁶² Many reformists chose to boycott the election (the turnout was 63% and 59% in the two rounds respectively, compared to 80% in 1997) and the reformist vote that

¹⁶² Karroubi contested the first round results, claiming vote rigging, but was not able to push for a recount.

did come was divided between Karroubi, Mostafa Moin and Mohsen Mehralizadeh. It was also rumoured that the Leader, who had initially favoured Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, had switched his support shortly before the first round and put his resources behind Ahmadinejad (Takeyh 2009: 235).

Especially ahead of the second round, when the Khamenei-Rafsanjani rivalry resurfaced, the traditionalist guardians mobilised the mosque networks, the IRGC and *Basij* volunteers in support of Ahmadinejad.¹⁶³ Shunned by the reformists, the traditionalists and the neo-conservatives alike, Rafsanjani spent most of his campaign lobbying for alliance in Tehran and Qom. In contrast, an energetic Ahmadinejad visited the urban poor and toured the neglected countryside to deliver his message of social justice. Significantly, his campaign featured conspicuously few references praising the clerical leadership of the IRI, including Khomeini. In this sense, the victory of this modest man against the country's wealthiest cleric and ultimate regime insider, securing 61% of the vote in the second round, was also a potent expression of discontent with the clerical elite.

Ahmadinejad's first term did not provide the type of dramatic institutional and ideological conflicts that had characterised the Khatami presidency. Behind the carefully maintained image of unity and harmony, however, divisions between the traditionalists and the neo-conservatives – and the two pillars of the regime – were growing. A key point of tension in this period, which would become a major cause of the breakdown of relations between the president and the Leader during Ahmadinejad's second term, was over the appointment of cabinet ministers. Nominally within the president's authority, it had become commonplace for the Leader to interfere in the appointment process. In a surprisingly defiant attempt to enforce his constitutional prerogatives, shortly after being elected Ahmadinejad fired the chiefs of four major public banks and went on to form his cabinet and senior administration without consulting the Leader. Most of his appointees were second generation revolutionaries: former IRGC members, *Basijis*, intelligence officials and prison administrators with little or no experience in government. He

¹⁶³ Deputy commander of the Guards, Mohammad Baqir Zulfadr, boasted: "Traditionalist forces won the election thanks to the smart and multi-front plan and through massive participation of the *basij*." *Sharq*, 14 July 2005; quoted in Takeyh (2009: 236).

also picked loyal disciples of Mesbah Yazdi from the Haqqani seminary for key positions.¹⁶⁴ Faced with this unexpected affront, the traditionalists in the Majles allied with Rafsanjani to block four of the president's nominees, including three nominations for the oil ministry.¹⁶⁵

In the process, it became apparent that populism – at least the type Ahmadinejad presented – and loyalty to the clerical establishment did not easily go together. The president's sharp attacks against Iran's 'oil mafia' and 'economic aristocrats' (targeting in particular Rafsanjani), together with his redistributive policies that included heavy injection of oil funds into the economy, increased subsidies and cash hand-outs for lower income families, drew the ire of the traditionalists, the pragmatists as well as some of his own followers.¹⁶⁶ Nor were these factions particularly pleased with Ahmadinejad's confrontational anti-western rhetoric, finding his conduct of foreign policy imprudent and too independently driven. The Leader's distrust in the president's policies and his instinct to protect and control the clerical establishment became visible in October 2005, when he issued a decree to expand the supervisory powers of the Expediency Council over the judiciary, the executive and the legislative branches.¹⁶⁷ He also instructed the EC to prepare an economic programme parallel to that of the president's. Furthermore, the establishment of the Strategic Council for Foreign Relations (*Shora-ye Rahbordi-ye Ravabet-e Khareji*, SCFR) in 2006 with another decree from the Leader was meant as a check on the president's ambitious forays into foreign policy.¹⁶⁸

Another controversial aspect of Ahmadinejad's presidency for the clerical establishment, leading to his eventual confrontation with the Leader, was the millenarian propaganda spread by the president's circle about the purported link between Ahmadinejad and the Twelfth Imam. In contrast to Khatami, who had

¹⁶⁴ Morteza Agha-Tehrani was appointed as the cabinet's "ethics advisor". Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei became the minister of intelligence, Manoucher Mohammadi the deputy foreign minister and Mohammad Naser Saghaye Biriya a senior advisor to the president. Gholam-Hossein Elham, also a member of the GC whose journalist wife Fatameh Rajabi wrote a book titled *Ahmadinejad: Miracle of the Third Millennium*, was first appointed as spokesperson to the president then the minister of justice.

¹⁶⁵ "Ahmadinejad embarrassed again", *Economist*, 23 November 2005

¹⁶⁶ Mohammad Khoshchreh, who was an economic adviser to Ahmadinejad but quit within three months of his election, became an outspoken critic of his economic policies. *Ettela'at*, 14 September 2006

¹⁶⁷ "Iran Moves to Curb Hard-Liners", *Washington Post*, 8 October 2005

¹⁶⁸ "Iran: New Foreign Policy Council Could Curtail Ahmadinejad's Power", *RFE/RL*, 29 June 2006.

shunned superstitious religious dogma and emphasised reason (*aql*) (1997: 26 – 27), Ahmadinejad and his mentor Mesbah Yazdi passionately embraced it. Mesbah Yazdi declared Ahmadinejad's 2005 victory a miraculous event and part of a divine plan.¹⁶⁹ Another cleric close to Mesbah Yazdi, Ayatollah Meshkini claimed that all members of the Seventh Majles were approved by the Twelfth Imam (Rakel 2009: 58). Ahmadinejad often suggested that his presidency had ushered in a new “wave of spirituality” (*mowj-e manaviyat*) across the region.¹⁷⁰ He stirred controversy after his address to the UN General Assembly in September 2005 when he claimed that he was surrounded by a halo of light – a clear reference to divine legitimacy, or *farr* – and that an invisible force had fixated the delegates' attention on him. He paid frequent visits to an obscure shrine in Jamkaran, south Tehran, where, according to popular legend, the Hidden Imam would reappear.¹⁷¹ Finally he made no secret of his conviction that the reappearance was imminent and that the main duty of his government was to prepare for his arrival.¹⁷²

For all its bizarre and superstitious characteristics, the neo-conservatives' emphasis on miraculous occurrences and prophetic expectations had distinct populist and pragmatic elements. By suggesting a link between himself and the Twelfth Imam, Ahmadinejad was effectively circumventing the clerical guardians to lay direct claim on divinely ordained guardianship. The elevation of Jamkaran as an alternative pilgrimage site to the traditional Shi'a shrines in Qom and Mashhad was one way in which the neo-conservatives attempted to popularise a messianic version of Shiism that was deeply mystical and occultist. Naturally, the 'Jamkaranisation of Shiism' (as reformist cleric Majid Ansari called it) by the followers of Ahmadinejad and the small cohort of clerics around Mesbah Yazdi, triggered criticism and accusations of 'deviation' from senior clerics with reformist as well as, increasingly, traditionalist political inclinations (Rahnema 2011: 70 – 75). Mesbah Yazdi, too, increasingly became a direct target of clerical

¹⁶⁹ *Part-o Sokhan*, 6 July 2005; 14 July 2005.

¹⁷⁰ See for example his comments on the spiritual resistance emerging in Palestine against Israel, 26 October 2005, Official website of the Presidency of the IRI, <http://www.president.ir/fa/2288>.

¹⁷¹ Ahmadinejad built a rail connection from the capital to Jamkaran when he was the mayor of Tehran. Mesbah Yazdi and Agha-Tehrani often expounded on the miraculous powers of the shrine and worked to elevate its status in the eyes of the pious folk.

¹⁷² *Emrooz*, 29 September 2005; *Etemaad-e Melli*, 1 July 2008

criticism, as his position came to represent an attack against the hybrid regime in favour of absolute guardianship.

However, as I noted above, these tensions were carefully managed between 2005 and 2009. Indeed the overall record of the neo-conservative and traditionalist dominated Seventh Majles displayed a marked loyalty to the authority of the Leader. Most vividly, in what Arjomand calls “an astounding feat of self-limitation” (2009: 174), the Majles in December 2008 undermined its own authority by giving up any theoretical right to oversee the financial and political activities of the Leader, the Guardian Council and the Expediency Council.¹⁷³ Ahmadinejad, too, frequently stressed his loyalty to the Leader, while the Leader strove to maintain a public image as above the fray of day-to-day politics. That image was to be undone after the presidential election in 2009, when the traditionalists and the neo-conservatives temporarily bridged their differences to counter what appeared to both factions a more imminent threat: the unexpected resurgence of the reformists.

The 2009 presidential election and the loss of democratic legitimacy

The presidential election of 12 June 2009 and its turbulent aftermath provided Iran with arguably its most critical socio-political juncture since the 1979 revolution. The path taken at that juncture culminated in an unprecedented loss of legitimacy for the hybrid regime and the temporary collapse of the electoral process as the IRI’s flawed but relatively effective method of managing popular demands and factional rivalries. The election, in which former reformists were mobilised at a speed and efficiency that took most regime insiders by surprise, resulted in a proclaimed victory for the incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad by a suspiciously wide margin in the first round. This led to allegations of extensive fraud, the largest mass demonstrations since the consolidation of the regime in 1983, an open confrontation between the state and society and the eventual suppression of the reformist ‘Green Movement’ (*Jonbesh-e Sabz*) by the traditionalist/neo-conservative alliance.

¹⁷³ “More Power To Iran's Most Powerful Leader”, *RFE/RL*, 19 December 2008.

Several interrelated factors explain the widespread enthusiasm behind the Green Movement. Domestically, increasing economic hardship for the lower middle and working classes as a result of high inflation, ironically spurred by Ahmadinejad's poorly managed redistributive policies, coupled with growing social restrictions and the loss of few civil liberties secured during the Khatami presidency, drove a new generation of young urban voters, especially women, into political activism.¹⁷⁴ In their attempts to appeal to these voters, the two presidential candidates of the movement – former Prime Minister Mir Hossain Mousavi and former Majles speaker Mehdi Karroubi – demonstrated that they had learned from the reformists' previous failures.

Mousavi and Karroubi built their political campaigns on a platform of “freedom, social justice and national sovereignty”.¹⁷⁵ Moving away from the relatively abstract and discredited notion of ‘reform’ towards a more tangible and universal ‘rights’ discourse, both campaigns issued their human rights charter and pledged to push for the ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (Nabavi 2012: 40; Sadeghi 2012). The more popular of the two candidates, Mousavi was able to unite the reformist base with the modernist right faction – a feat that had eluded Khatami – thanks to his personal relations with both Khatami and Rafsanjani. But the emphasis of his campaign on economic justice and the elimination of corruption revealed a conscious effort not to be identified strictly with the upper middle and middle classes – roughly associated with Rafsanjani and Khatami, respectively – and reach out to the lower middle and working classes. Mousavi's own reputation as a long-time champion of socio-economic justice and able manager of the economy during the war with Iraq lent credibility to his message.

Geopolitically, the election of Barack Obama as the new US president in November 2008, and his expressed desire to reverse his predecessor's belligerent policies in the region and especially towards Iran, created a sense

¹⁷⁴ In order to emphasise the electoral importance of this young urban demographic, note that in 2009 nearly 70% of Iranians lived in cities, more than half of the university students were women, who faced systematic legal and professional discrimination, the median age was 26 and the voting age 16.

¹⁷⁵ These were enshrined as the key demands of the movement in the charter adopted by Mousavi and Karroubi the following year. “Mousavi Posts Green Movement Charter, Calls For Trial Of Vote Saboteurs”, *RFE/RL*, 15 June 2010.

that a more moderate Iranian foreign policy rhetoric could help defuse military tensions over Iran's nuclear programme and help restore its economic ties with the Gulf monarchies and the West.¹⁷⁶ This appetite for reduced tensions, following a period of exceptional geopolitical tension under Ahmadinejad, appears to have contributed to the popular enthusiasm behind the Green Movement. It is important to remember, however, that both Mousavi and Karroubi consistently emphasised their firm support for Iran's right to develop nuclear power. Alongside freedom and social justice, the two leaders highlighted the defence of national sovereignty as a key component of their platform, presenting the Green Movement as a continuation of the Constitutional Revolution, the movement for the nationalisation of the oil industry (1951 – 53) and the Islamic Revolution (Holliday 2011: 149; Dabashi 2011).

The lively and remarkably candid televised debates between the candidates before the election, a first in the country's history, allowed the voters to see the major differences of opinion between the candidates – not only between the reformists and the neo-conservatives, but also within the security establishment, thanks to the heated debate between Ahmadinejad and former IRGC commander Mohsen Rezai. The debates generated a sense of genuine choice that would not transpire through political rallies and slogans alone. Finally, the extensive and highly effective use of the social media played a crucial role in the emergence of an organic grassroots political movement and popular mobilisation both before and after the election (Mottahedeh 2010; Cross 2010; Kamalipour 2010).

Convinced that they had the necessary popular support, the Green Movement's strategy was to drive people out to vote for change and achieve a similarly high turnout as in the 1997 presidential election, which they presumed would secure victory with a margin wide enough to be too risky for the guardians to manipulate. Yet although the turnout on 12 June was indeed the highest in an Iranian election yet (85%), the following morning the Interior Ministry announced a landslide victory for Ahmadinejad. Claiming that the same ministry had informed him overnight that he had won and that Majles speaker Ali Larijani had even congratulated him on his victory, Mousavi disputed the

¹⁷⁶ "Barack Obama offers Iran 'new beginning' with video message", *Guardian*, 20 March 2009

outcome and called it illegitimate.¹⁷⁷ Karroubi and Rezai also challenged the result. Three days before the election, several reformist websites had published a letter, allegedly written by Mesbah Yazdi to the Interior Ministry staff, encouraging them to ensure his protégé's victory, saying "for you, everything is permitted".¹⁷⁸ Shortly afterwards, Rafsanjani issued an open letter to Khamenei, calling on him to guarantee a fair election. Building on these earlier suspicions, various aspects of the announced outcome that seemed implausible convinced many Iranians that their vote had been stolen and drove them to the streets.¹⁷⁹

The swift and heavy handed response by the IRGC and the *Basij* to the mass demonstrations, organised raids against Mousavi and Karroubi campaign offices and the arrest of prominent Green activists within twenty-four hours of the election, followed by televised confessions by activists and unknown protestors of their complicity in a western plot to overthrow the regime, suggested that the guardians were prepared for open confrontation. Even so, they could not have predicted the intensity of the demonstrations or control the flow of events during the highly volatile first week after the election. The same argument goes for Mousavi and Karroubi, who at times appeared to be following the masses rather than leading them, as the protests spread and the slogans transformed from challenging the election to challenging the regime in a matter of days. Notably, however, neither man backed down from their call for a fresh election, even when the clashes turned deadly and Khamenei intervened publicly on behalf of Ahmadinejad. Ultimately, open confrontation with the Leader led to a pervasive crackdown against the Green Movement, which was labelled by its opponents the "green path of sedition", the imprisonment of thousands of its supporters, including the eventual home arrest of Mousavi and Karroubi, and the intense securitisation of the IRI regime, which was facing its most acute domestic legitimacy crisis since institutional consolidation.

¹⁷⁷ Significantly, the allegation about Larijani's access to classified information and his phone conversation with Mousavi first appeared on a pro-Ahmadinejad website *Rajanews* and was later removed.

¹⁷⁸ "Mesbah Yazdi's Decree to Rig Votes", *Roaz Online*, 9 June 2009, <http://www.roozonline.com/english/news3/newsitem/article/mesbah-yazdis-decree-to-rig-votes.html>

¹⁷⁹ For example, Ahmadinejad had allegedly defeated Mousavi in every major city, including in the latter's hometown of Tabriz. Karroubi, who commands a proven support base, had received less than 1% of the overall vote.

If we were to mark a single event as the critical turning point for the Green Movement as well as the fate of the IRI hybrid regime, it would be the Friday prayer sermon that the Leader delivered at the University of Tehran on 19 June. During this widely anticipated sermon, Khamenei uncharacteristically stepped out of his public image as the arbiter of disputes and unequivocally endorsed Ahmadinejad, thus becoming a direct party to the conflict. Calling the election a “historic moment” that “put religious democracy on display for the whole world to see”, he declared that Ahmadinejad’s ideas were closer to his, accused foreign powers of being behind the unrest (“They thought that Iran is Georgia”), and warned opposition leaders of retribution for the “bloodshed and chaos” to come if they did not end the protests.¹⁸⁰

The extent of the rupture among the regime’s top guardians became fully visible when Rafsanjani came out to defy Khamenei publicly in another Friday sermon on 17 July. Having become the primary target of Ahmadinejad’s attacks over the years, Rafsanjani had put his support behind Mousavi before the election. After 12 June, he met with senior clerics in Qom and reportedly called for a meeting of the Assembly of Experts; the only body with the power to remove the Leader. Two days after Khamenei’s Friday sermon, Rafsanjani’s daughter was arrested and sentenced to prison for spreading propaganda against the regime. Delivering his sermon against this backdrop, Rafsanjani spoke about “doubts” regarding the credibility of the election and the loss of trust in the country’s institutions, and frequently alluded to the Iranian and Shi’a concepts of just rule and popular legitimacy. “Legitimacy of the country comes from its people’s consent”, he stated and added that Khomeini had given the utmost importance to popular will. He made the case for the necessity to have both the Islamic and the republican pillars functioning side by side, and pleaded for the release of political prisoners.¹⁸¹ In return, the Leader stripped Rafsanjani of his role as a Friday prayer leader, and in March 2011 he was not re-elected as the head of the Assembly of Experts. Demonstrating the gravity of the fallout within the regime elite, this period also marked the end of the private meetings

¹⁸⁰ “[English Voiceover] Imam Khamenei(HA) - Friday Sermons - June 19, 2009”, *YouTube*, posted by “altigerr”, 19 June 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLiBp8qxuMA>.

¹⁸¹ For an English translation of the sermon, “IRAN: Full text of Rafsanjani’s lengthy speech” *LA Times*, 17 July 2009.

that Khamenei and Rafsanjani held every Tuesday for years, even at the height of their personal rivalry (Eshraghi and Baji 2012).

Regardless of the actual scale of electoral manipulation, it is safe to argue that the 2009 presidential election and the consequent events resulted in the collapse of the electoral system in Iran, which failed in carrying out all three of its fundamental functions: managing popular participation in politics, socialising new generations into the IRI system and negotiating factional competition. Indeed, electoral politics not only failed to diffuse, but actually provoked existing tensions. The Leader's direct involvement on one side of the divide effectively rendered the most powerful guardian complicit in this failure. I argued in Chapter 2 that the social perception of justice plays a governing role in ascribing legitimacy to regimes and governments, as well as to rebellions and revolutions in Iran. In this case, the profound sense of injustice shared by a significant portion of the population brought the democratic legitimacy of the IRI regime into doubt and justified rebellion against it.

Leader – President rivalry after 2009

Rafsanjani's emasculation by the Leader and the suppression of the Green Movement left the traditionalist and neo-conservative factions to compete for political influence. Political contestation in the period after 2009 took place in an atmosphere characterised by exceptional social and institutional distrust and paranoia, compounded with growing regional tensions following the outbreak of the 'Arab Spring' revolutions and especially the Syrian civil war, as well as an acute economic crisis caused by both governmental mismanagement and a new round of international sanctions on Iran.¹⁸² In this environment, the underlying rivalry between the Leader and the president surfaced and morphed into a new power struggle played out mainly in the shape of byzantine palace intrigues.

Emboldened by his re-election and convinced of his popularity as well as, most likely, his divinely guided destiny, President Ahmadinejad set out to increase the institutional powers of his office, challenging in the process the

¹⁸² On the impact of the sanctions on Iran's economy see Cheraghali (2013), Farzanegan (2013) and Peterson (2013).

authority of the guardians as well as the Majles. As regards the latter, Ahmadinejad contradicted Khomeini's earlier statements to claim that the presidency – and not the parliament – was “the most important branch of government”.¹⁸³ His remarks drew criticism from traditionalist MPs. One of the fiercest opponents of Ahmadinejad, Ali Motahari, who is the brother-in-law of Ali Larijani, warned that “the parliament is still on top of affairs and has the authority to impeach the president and remove him from power.”¹⁸⁴ In January 2011, following a dispute over the appointment of a new governor for the central bank, Ahmadinejad wrote an open letter accusing the Majles, the judiciary and the Expediency Council of meddling in his administration's affairs.¹⁸⁵ The Expediency Council responded by instructing the president to perform his duties and stop imposing his personal interpretations of the law.¹⁸⁶

The tension over the right to appoint and dismiss ministers, which had started in 2005 and grew in early 2008 when Ahmadinejad abruptly fired Mostafa Pourmohammadi, the interior minister imposed on him by the Leader, took a more open and destabilising turn after the presidential election. In July 2009, Ahmadinejad fired two key cabinet members, who were also close to Khamenei: Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Hossein Saffar Harandi and Minister of Intelligence Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei. The president was particularly intent on enhancing his authority over the conduct of foreign and national security policies, both of which traditionally fell within the Leader's ‘reserved domains’. His appointment of personal confidants as special envoys for foreign affairs to work independently from the foreign ministry led Khamenei to declare that “parallel diplomacy is not acceptable”, while Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki described the practice as “naïve” and “unwise”.¹⁸⁷

In December 2010, in an open act of defiance, without consulting the Leader, Ahmadinejad fired Mottaki while the latter was on a foreign visit. The

¹⁸³ *Iran*, 18 September 2010.

¹⁸⁴ “MPs respond to president's remarks on the role of Majlis”, *Tehran Times*, 20 September 2010.

¹⁸⁵ “President Ahmadinejad accuses Majlis, Judiciary, EC of interference in administrative affairs”, *Tehran Times*, 26 January 2011.

¹⁸⁶ “Hashdar-e Majma'-e Tashkhis be Dowlat” *Rooz Online*, 6 February 2011, <http://www.roozonline.com/persian/news/newsitem/archive/2011/february/06/article/-e4e466cdad.html>.

¹⁸⁷ “Enteqad-e tond-e vezir-e omor-e khareje az movaziye kari dar dowlat” *Jahannews*, 6 September 2010, <http://jahannews.com/vdci3paz5t1apz2.cbct.html>.

move was condemned by the *Kayhan* newspaper as exceptionally insulting, but celebrated by pro-Ahmadinejad *Rajanews* website as “long overdue”.¹⁸⁸ In April 2011, the president forced the Minister of Intelligence Heydar Moslehi to resign. When the Leader promptly reinstated Moslehi, Ahmadinejad protested in the dramatic manner of not appearing in public or attending cabinet meetings for eleven days. This was the clearest sign yet of the growing crisis between the Leader and the president.

We should note that most of the criticisms by the traditionalists were directed not at the president personally, but rather at his aides and confidants; especially his most trusted advisor and the father of his daughter-in-law, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, whose close relationship with Ahmadinejad dated back to their years in the IRGC. By 2009, Mashaei had already made enemies among the traditionalists for his anti-clerical views, occasional praise for Iran’s pre-Islamic history and message of friendship to Israel. Immediately after the 2009 election, Ahmadinejad’s appointment of Mashaei as his first vice president triggered a clerical backlash and a standoff that only ended when the Leader instructed the president to remove Mashaei from the post.¹⁸⁹ Ahmadinejad obliged and subsequently made Mashaei his chief of staff. In September 2010, when the president was in New York to address the UN General Assembly, Mashaei stirred controversy by suggesting that the clergy should be removed from power in order to “re-establish a great civilisation without Arab-style clerics who have tainted and destroyed the country for the past 31 years” (Choksy 2010).¹⁹⁰ At the same time, Hamid Baqai, a senior advisor to the president, likened Ahmadinejad to Cyrus the Great; a provocative comparison given the taboo surrounding the glorification of the country’s pre-Islamic past.

Such declarations may be interpreted both as expressions of genuine conviction among Ahmadinejad’s entourage in the president’s divinely ordained

¹⁸⁸ *Kayhan*, 14 December 2010; “Taghir-e dirhengam dar reis-e vezare-te khareje”, *Rajanews*, 13 December 2010,

<http://rajanews.com/detail.asp?id=72626>.

¹⁸⁹ “Nameh-ye Rahbar-e Moazzam-e Enqelab-e Islam be Reis-e Jomhoor dar morad-e Agha-ye Mashaei”, Official website of the Supreme Leader of IRI, 18 July 2009, <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/message-content?id=7495>.

¹⁹⁰ For Mashaei’s views on *velayat-e faqih*, see “Daramadi bar qer Janet motefaved mohandes Rahim Mashaei az velayat-e faqih”, Official website of Rahim Mashaei, <http://www.rahimmashaei.ir/mashaei/6>.

authority, as well as their recognition of the political clergy's diminishing popularity and the need to dissociate themselves from it by using an alternative discourse. Indeed from the outset, both Ahmadinejad and Mashaei's image as modest, self-made men and regime outsiders stood in stark contrast with the exclusive personal networks of the IRI's ruling clerical elite. But to portray the president's circle as the secular nationalist antithesis of the clerical establishment would be misleading. As much as their ideological differences, the feud between the neo-conservatives and the traditionalists was a natural outcome of the successive purges that left the two groups without a common foe and fuelled an internecine rivalry that became toxic in an atmosphere of constant suspicion and the absence of public debate (Alavi 2011).

In any case, by 2011 the traditionalist guardians were channelling their full energy into eliminating what they called the "deviant current" (*jarayan-e enherafi*). A *Kayhan* editorial in May argued the president's team was "contaminated" and had to be "quarantined".¹⁹¹ Conservative clerics labelled the "deviant current" a foreign conspiracy and its members "infiltrators".¹⁹² Showing that the security forces were not immune from factional divisions, but also leaving no doubt as to where the loyalty of the top brass lay, senior IRGC commanders swore oaths of allegiance to the Leader and the *Basij* carried out 'manoeuvres' to defend the revolution against the "foreign-backed deviant current".¹⁹³ Onetime supporter of the president, Ayatollah Jannati announced during a Friday prayer sermon that the "perverted team is gradually being eliminated".¹⁹⁴ Most tellingly of the failure of the neo-conservative project, Mesbah Yazdi also publicly distanced himself from the group. Labelling Mashaei a freemason and likening him to Ali Mohammad Shirazi – the founder of Bab'ism,

¹⁹¹ *Kayhan*, 11 May 2011.

¹⁹² "A'zai-ye jarian-e enherafi shenasaye'i va shenasamedar mishavand", *Jahannews*, 5 May 2011, <http://jahannews.com/vdcdnk0fxyt09s6.2a2y.html>.

¹⁹³ "Basij beraye moqabeleh ba 'jarian-e enherafi' amade mishavad", *BBC Persian*, 20 May 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2011/05/110520_l39_hamedani_sepah_basij_enheraf.shtml.

¹⁹⁴ "Jannati: Per o bal-e jarian-e enherafi dar hal ghichi shodan ast, kheyli devam nemiavarand", *Aftab News*, 13 May 2011, <http://aftabnews.ir/vdcjtaevouqe8vz.fsfu.html>.

which is viewed as heretical by the Shia clergy – Mesbah Yazdi accused Ahmadinejad's advisors of “bewitching” the president.¹⁹⁵

Between 2010 and 2013, in coordination with the judiciary, which is headed by Ali Larijani's brother Sadeq, the Majles impeached nine of Ahmadinejad's ministers. The president himself was also threatened with impeachment. In May 2011, dozens of people with close ties to Mashaei were arrested on charges of sorcery. In late 2011, the president had to fight allegations that his chief of staff was involved in the country's biggest banking scandal, which involved USD 2.6 billion in illegally obtained credit from state banks, channelled to private companies to purchase state entities.¹⁹⁶ As the president responded to accusations by threatening to reveal incriminating evidence against major regime figures, one MP commented, “We do not need an enemy, when we have Ahmadinejad”.¹⁹⁷

The power struggle also had a destabilising effect on Iran's foreign relations, particularly on the nuclear issue. Faced with spiralling inflation and a budget deficit that forced his government to slash fuel and food subsidies and cash hand-outs for the poor – two key policies of his government – Ahmadinejad appeared more eager in his second term to negotiate an agreement with the P5+1 (the five permanent UN Security Council members and Germany) that could ease the tightening economic sanctions.¹⁹⁸ Not trusting the president with the issue and unwilling to allow him a popular victory, his traditionalist rivals put up obstacles. When the government signed a nuclear swap deal with Turkey and Brazil in May 2010 (which was ultimately ignored by the West), Ali Larijani and his cousin, traditionalist MP Ahmad Tavakkoli, dismissed the agreement as misguided and foolish.¹⁹⁹ In December 2011, in the midst of a behind-the-scenes

¹⁹⁵ “Hashdar-e Mesbah Yazdi nesbet be nofooz-e feramasonri dar Iran”, *BBC Persian*, 13 April 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2011/04/110412_144_mesbah_yazdi_iranism.shtml; “Mesbah Yazdi: Ba’zi mikhahand ba in harf ke Imam Zaman jam’e ra edareh mikonad, lozoom-e vali-ye faqih ra zir soal beberand”, *Entekhab*, 13 May 2011.

¹⁹⁶ “Iranian president Ahmadinejad denies aide is linked to bank scam”, *Guardian*, 15 September 2011; “Iran sentences 4 to death in biggest bank fraud case”, *Press TV*, 13 February 2013.

¹⁹⁷ “Ba vojood-e Ahmadinjead Iran niyaz be doshman nadarad”, *Rooz Online*, 14 November 2011, <http://www.roozonline.com/english/news3/newsitem/archive/2011/november/14/article/-1983b5fc5d.html>.

¹⁹⁸ “Iran Redistributes Wealth in Bid to Fight Sanctions”, *Wall Street Journal*, 27 July 2011

¹⁹⁹ “Hashdar-e Larijani be keshvarha-ye gharbi”, *Rooz Online*, 23 May 2010, <http://www.roozonline.com/persian/archive/archivenews/news/archive/2010/may/23/article>

diplomatic exchange between the representatives of Obama and Ahmadinejad administrations, came the storming of the British embassy in Tehran, allegedly carried out by plainclothes *Basij* members acting on the orders of Ali Larijani, who is himself a former Guardsman (Parsi 2011).

Thus, as the Majles elections in March and May 2012 approached, not only were the battle lines drawn clearly, but also the neo-conservatives had already suffered significant setbacks. In this first major election that the regime had to conduct since the presidential poll in 2009 and which Khamenei declared “more sensitive than all others”, the traditionalists had two major objectives: to marginalise Ahmadinejad’s supporters in the Majles, while also creating an impression of popular support for the regime to restore its legitimacy.²⁰⁰ The traditionalists accused the ‘deviationists’ of secretly forming alliance with the ‘seditionists’ to derail the elections, which the Intelligence Minister Moslehi called the most complex problem facing the established order (*nezam*).²⁰¹ In fact, facing an ongoing crackdown and with their leaders banned from politics or in prison, the vast majority of the reformist groups did not participate in the election or run political campaigns, encouraging instead a boycott to emphasise the regime’s lost legitimacy.²⁰² In contrast, the regime made a concerted effort to increase participation, making the case that a low turnout would lead to a military strike on Iran by the US or Israel.

The declared outcome clearly served the first of the traditionalists’ two goals. Whether it restored the regime some of its lost legitimacy remained an open question, in part due to the inability to rely on the veracity of the declared results, including the official turnout figure of 64%, which the state media declared a victory of the people (*piroozī-ye mellat*) and an expression of outpouring of support for the regime. The figure may have been exaggerated, given the reformist boycott; but it is unlikely to have been dramatically inflated. It is important to note that, unlike the presidential elections, legislative elections

[e/-73bc789d0b.html](http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/pages/?cid=99158); “Enteqad-e shadid-e Ahmad Tavakkoli az biyani-ye Tehran”, *Tabnak*, 18 May 2010, <http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/pages/?cid=99158>.

²⁰⁰ “Ayatollah Khamenei: Hesasiyat-e in entekhabat az defa’at-e pish bishtar ast” *BBC Persian*, 29 February 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2012/02/120229_majlis09th_khamenei.shtml.

²⁰¹ *ISNA*, 6 September 2012.

²⁰² Consequently, opposition websites reacted angrily when former president Khatami, who had personally supported the boycott, did show up to vote on the day.

in the IRI historically have been less about national issues and more about local, even personal issues – given the amount of competition among the large number of candidates running for office in 207 districts and 31 provinces.

What is less ambiguous is that the outcome was a clear victory for the Leader, whose loyal supporters claimed a majority of the 290 seats in the Majles. An important indicator of change was the large number of candidates from Mesbah Yazdi's United Front (*Jebhe Paydari*) – a key source of backing for the president in 2005 and 2009 – who publicly distanced themselves from Ahmadinejad in 2012. His support base reduced to a small minority in the Majles, Ahmadinejad's defeat was accentuated by stories such as the failure of his sister to get elected in her hometown.²⁰³ With the Majles now firmly in the Leader's hand, Ahmadinejad was reduced to a lame duck president during his last year in office, although the open confrontation between the Leader and the president continued to escalate. Unable to run for a third term, he presented Mashaei as his preferred candidate for the June 2013 presidential election, which was – unsurprisingly – rejected by the Guardian Council. Much more unexpected was the rejection of Hashemi Rafsanjani's application, which came as a vivid demonstration of the level of distrust among the top revolutionary elite and the extent to which Khamenei had succeeded in personalising his control over the institutions of the IRI.

Conclusion

All three presidents of the post-1989 era clashed with and were ultimately defeated by the Leader, whose constitutional authority and personal influence grew considerably after 1989. At the same time, however, each presidency has come to represent a different set of dynamics and symbols in the history of the Islamic Republic. The Rafsanjani presidency symbolised the beginning of a fundamental economic and geopolitical transformation in Iran following the end

²⁰³ While the official media carried the story as proof of the president's dwindling popularity, the reformist media and the western press questioned whether this amounted to a "sign of fraud". "Ahmadinejad's sister loses in Iran vote", *CNN International*, 3 March 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/03/world/meast/iran-parliamentary-elections/>

of the war with Iraq, the death of the charismatic leader and the end of the Cold War. It also saw the intensification of factional rivalries and the expansion of elite politics into the popular realm. The Khatami presidency symbolised the intensifying conflict between the two pillars of the hybrid regime and confirmed the entry of the masses as an organised force into the IRI politics. The Ahmadinejad presidency was mired with social, economic, political and geopolitical tensions and confrontations from the beginning to the end. It was during this era that the IRI regime experienced its most acute domestic legitimacy crisis since its inception, and temporarily lost its hybrid character.

Even though Ahmadinejad was protected by Khamenei and the traditionalist guardians in the clash between the state and society after 12 June 2009, it was also he who challenged the Leader more openly, consistently and audaciously than either Rafsanjani or Khatami to consolidate the powers of the executive office. In his attempt to transform the IRI from within, Khatami refrained from confrontation whenever it risked undoing the regime. Despite being systematically suppressed and marginalised, the reformist leadership remained a part of the IRI leadership elite. Sought by the traditionalist guardians as a loyal and populist response to the reformist challenge, Ahmadinejad's anti-clerical populism arguably proved to be more threatening and destabilising for the IRI elite and the clerical establishment as a whole, if only due to his dogged determination and refusal to compromise. As Chapter 7 will discuss further, it was the impact of the Ahmadinejad presidency and the growing legitimacy crisis surrounding the IRI regime that prompted a return to hybridity in 2013.

CHAPTER 6

THE FALL OF THE KEMALIST GUARDIANSHIP IN TURKEY

Introduction

The end of the Cold War and the wave of liberal triumphalism in the West ushered in a debate as to whether the end of modernity had finally arrived and the world was about to step into 'post-modernity' (Cooper 2000: 22). In the 1990s and the early 2000s the proponents of 'post-modernity' held that the modern era in politics, symbolised by the sovereign nation-state, was giving way to a new age, where borders were becoming irrelevant, ideas and institutions globalised, and the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs increasingly blurred. Others pointed out, correctly, that even though its status as the uncontested sovereign actor of the international order was challenged by the diverse forces and consequences of globalisation, the obituary of the nation-state was being written prematurely (Axford 1995; Albrow 1996; Barber 2000; Bielskis 2005).

Indeed, the ensuing period has resulted not so much in a clearly traceable transition from modernity into post-modernity, but rather a complex arrangement where the dynamics of globalisation undermine certain institutions and features of the nation-state, while strengthening others. Likewise, rather than an evolution of the international system towards a liberal global order, structured upon western-built supra-national institutions and maintained first and foremost by the politico-military might of the United States, the emerging structure is increasingly multipolar with alternative power centres made up of semi-integrated regional blocs or international alliances.

As a middle power located at the intersection of various regional blocs that has been embedded in the western security establishment since the beginning of the Cold War and in the global economic market since the early

1980s, Turkey has been deeply exposed to and profoundly affected by the shifts in geopolitical and socio-economic dynamics and alliances in the post-Cold War era.²⁰⁴ This chapter looks into these dynamics as well as the key debates, actors and turning points for the Turkish hybrid system in the midst of the modernity vs. post-modernity debate.

I point out that the 'post-modern' arrangement that the military-bureaucratic guardians of the Kemalist regime attempted to install with their 1997 intervention proved to be short lived. Coming to power through elections in 2002 and supported by a coalition of liberals and conservatives at home, and by both the US and the EU abroad, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government gradually disassembled the institutional hegemony of the Kemalist guardians. The end of the hybrid regime was also facilitated by the divisions among the guardians as to the course of action to be taken in response to the changing status quo. These internal divisions and the fluidity of the political alliances that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s remind us once again that the two pillars of the hybrid regime are not monolithic entities and, correspondingly, the outcome of a transition from the hybrid system is not preordained.

Turkey in the 1990s: Lost in Transition

Illusions of post-modern guardianship: 'the 28 February process'

Despite all the talk of post-modernity and the declaration of the end of history, the 1990s brought limited change to the institutional and geopolitical status quo in Turkey. While the end of the Cold War did cast NATO's *raison d'être* in the absence of the Soviet Union, Turkey's role in the alliance and the 'special partnership' between Ankara and the US into relative ambivalence, this did not have an immediate impact on policy decisions on either side. On the contrary, during much of the 1990s, the strategic ties between Turkey and the United States and its regional allies grew stronger.

²⁰⁴ For a definition and discussion of 'middle powers' see Jordaan (2003).

Domestically, too, the system of Kemalist guardianship appeared firmly entrenched in the 1990s thanks to the constitutional framework put in place after the 1980 military coup, which expanded significantly the guardian state's institutional control over civilian politics and civil society. But the collapse of the Soviet Union and the seeming demise of the left both at home and abroad meant that the guardians could no longer employ their Cold War-era threat rhetoric to justify their supra-political status. At the same time, Turkey's transition into a free market economy, which had started in earnest in the early 1980s under the supervision of the military junta, made direct interventions in civilian politics costlier in macro-economic terms and therefore less desirable for an institution that valued its reputation in the eyes of the people (Koçer 2002). A post-modern era called for 'post-modern guardianship'.

Post-modern guardianship, as envisioned by influential generals and bureaucrats of the era, embodied two basic characteristics: first, it was based on a significantly broadened threat perception formulated upon the ambiguous and sweeping description of national security as set by the 1983 law. Second, it focused on *indirect* ways of keeping society and politics in check, namely through the guardians' civilian associates. The reformulation of security threats allowed the guardians to maintain an open-ended and extensive list of internal and external 'enemies of the secular and unitary order', and to frame and respond to Turkey's complex and evolving socio-economic problems from a security-minded perspective. Referred to as the "national security system" in a booklet published by the NSC General Secretariat in 1990, this approach further divorced the idea of the state from society, conceiving the former as an innately sacred entity that required protection from an inherently menacing (or at best, immature) population.²⁰⁵

The two national security threats that received prominent attention in the NSC meetings and the mainstream media throughout the 1990s were ethnic separatism (*bölücülük*) and religious 'reactionism' (*irtica*). The former has been used in particular as an all-encompassing term to refer to the conflict between the Turkish state and the militant Kurdistan Worker's Party (*Partiya Karkerên*

²⁰⁵ The booklet is revealingly titled "The Concept and the Scope of the State". See MGK (1990: 43 - 44).

Kurdistan, PKK). This categorisation has effectively enabled the guardians to reduce a multi-faceted problem to the exclusive domain of security and geopolitics, downplaying its socio-economic, cultural and humanitarian roots and implications. Dealing with a complex issue under the heading of separatism emphasised its increasingly violent militant aspect, which was in turn used to justify the state's heavy-handed policies and the continued implementation of emergency laws in the Kurdish provinces. *İrtica*, on the other hand, had long been a byword for political Islam in the Kemalist lexicon, and was also used in a sweeping fashion to cover all hues of political Islam.

Although, as discussed in Chapter 3, both issues had their origins in the nationalisation, centralisation and secularisation of the state in the late Ottoman/early republican periods, the revival of both the Kurdish and Islamist challenges to the Kemalist regime were in large part a consequence of the 1980 coup. It was the systematic torture and abuse of thousands of Kurdish political activists, most notoriously in the Diyarbakır prison, and the wholesale rejection of their cultural rights under the military junta that had popularised the Marxist guerrilla organisation PKK among Turkey's Kurds, and legitimised it as the representative of Kurdish nationalist aspirations.²⁰⁶ Meanwhile, the rise of political Islam was precipitated by the junta's policy of promoting a nationalist religious discourse loyal to state authority, known as the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, to counter the wide spectrum of leftist movements – an attempt that should be viewed in the context of the wider western strategy of recruiting Islamists against communists during the early 1980s.²⁰⁷

During the 1980s and the 1990s, social and political movements that took Sunni Islam as an ideological reference grew in popularity and significance on the back of three factors. The first was the use of Islam as a unifying discourse by the state in the 1980s, accompanied by increased funding for religious education

²⁰⁶ In the years preceding the coup, the PKK, or 'Apocular' (i.e. the followers of Apo, the short name for the group's founding leader Abdullah Öcalan) as they were better known at the time, were more focused on eliminating opponents (both armed and civilian) within the Kurdish political movement, with the alleged support of the Turkish intelligence agency (*Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, MİT). See Mumcu (1993).

²⁰⁷ Promoted chiefly by US President Jimmy Carter's national security adviser Zbigniew Brezinski, these attempts included the US-Saudi-Pakistani support for the Afghan mujahedeen against the Soviet occupation or the Israeli help for the rise of Hamas in an attempt to divide and weaken the Palestinian nationalist movement.

in public schools and the expansion of state-run clerical institutions, known as *İmam Hatip* schools.²⁰⁸ With the support of the military, the ANAP governments of Prime Minister Turgut Özal (1983 – 1989) also oversaw a rapid increase in the number of mosques around the country.²⁰⁹ The second factor was the emergence of a new class of pious entrepreneurs in the Anatolian provinces as a result of the free market reforms, privatisation initiatives and economic incentives by ANAP and succeeding centre-right coalition governments in the 1980s and early 1990s. Finally, we have to mention the growing popular appeal of a moralistic rhetoric expounded by the Islamists in a period of sharp economic inequality and social injustice – also a consequence of the sudden disappearance of the state’s already meagre social welfare services in the neo-liberal reform era (Tuğal 2009).

Led by experienced politician and engineering professor Necmettin Erbakan, the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, RP) took a sharp stance against socio-economic injustice, state enforced secularism and Turkey’s western orientation in foreign policy. By the 1990s, Welfare had become a contender for government. Its effective grassroots organisation in the sprawling working class neighbourhoods of urban metropolises helped the party win the municipal governments of Istanbul and Ankara in the March 1994 local elections. An aspiring Welfare politician, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan first rose to prominence as the elected head of Istanbul’s metropolitan municipality during this period. In December 1995, the party came out on top in the general election with 22% of the vote, and went on to form Turkey’s first Islamist-led coalition government together with the centre-right True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*, DYP) in June 1996.

Convinced that their predecessors’ social engineering project had backfired and the rise of the Islamists now constituted a direct threat to the

²⁰⁸ Under military supervision, mandatory religion classes were introduced in elementary and high school levels, while at the same time new clerical schools were established. Originally founded as vocational schools to train religious personnel, their curricula were eventually expanded and restrictions on their students to enter university entrance exams were lifted. As a result, for pious Muslims, *İmam Hatip* schools became competitive alternatives to regular public high schools. The number of students enrolled in these institutions rose from 34,570 in 1974 to 511,502 in 1997. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a Welfare Party politician during the 1990s and the country’s future prime minister, is himself an *İmam Hatip* alum. See Çakır, Bozan and Talu (2004).

²⁰⁹ As many as 1500 mosques were built every year in the 1980s. By 1988 there was a mosque for every 857 people (Kasaba 2008: 390).

secular regime, the senior cadre of the TSK decided that the Islamists had to go.²¹⁰ However, as one prominent member of the NSC during those years put it, “this time the job has to be done by the unarmed forces” rather than the Armed Forces.²¹¹ The ‘unarmed forces’ consisted of the guardians’ civilian associates in politics,²¹² academia, judiciary, labour unions and other civil society groups, who in coordination with senior generals issued public warnings or organised demonstrations condemning Welfare’s anti-secular activities.²¹³ Extensive coverage was devoted to such events in mainstream newspapers, whose editorial boards went as far as publishing fabricated news stories, some serviced directly by the military, in an effort to manipulate public opinion against the Islamist-led government.²¹⁴ In the words of İsmet Berkan, the Ankara correspondent of the daily *Radikal* at the time:²¹⁵

Without the media [the operation] would not have succeeded. The media almost voluntarily became part of the psychological operation [against Welfare]. We were used and allowed ourselves to be used. We are all responsible for the 28 February process.

The pressure on Erbakan’s government intensified in February 1997, when the army moved tanks across the streets of an Ankara suburb in an open reaction to a celebration in support of the Islamist resistance movements Hamas and Hizbullah organised by the local Welfare municipality. This was followed by

²¹⁰ Speaking to journalists days before the 1997 intervention, Vice Admiral Güven Erkaya said, “extremist religious currents present a vital threat to the future of Turkey. *İrtica* has become a more urgent matter than the PKK. I voiced this opinion at the NSC, and will do so again. Turkey is not without its owners.” “Erbakan’ın MGK’daki zor anları”, *Milliyet*, 12 August 1997.

²¹¹ The statement, again by Vice Admiral Erkaya, was reported by then editor-in-chief of *Hürriyet* newspaper, Ertuğrul Özkök in his column on 20 December 1996.

²¹² Vice Admiral Erkaya on then President Süleyman Demirel’s role: “The attitude and the declarations of Mr. President gave confidence to the people. He emboldened the society. His role in strengthening civil society has been very significant. As Turkey has gone through a very tense period, the president has maintained a perfectly consistent line. He did not make concessions on the protection of secularism, democracy and Atatürkist thought.” “Erbakan’ın MGK’daki zor anları”, *Milliyet*, 12 August 1997.

²¹³ For the involvement of the five prominent civil society organisations (two labour unions, two merchant organisations and one employers’ union, known as the ‘Gang of Five’) in this process, see Baydur (2000).

²¹⁴ Between August 1996 and April 1997, the daily *Milliyet* ran 16 headlines, which reported a stern ‘warning’ to the government – six in the month of April alone. See section on the role of the media in the 1997 coup in TGNA (2012: 969 – 979).

²¹⁵ “Medya olmasaydı 28 Şubat olmazdı”, *Yeni Şafak*, 16 April 2012.

an ultimatum against the government issued by the military top brass during the NSC meeting on 28 February 1997.²¹⁶ After three months of resistance and attempted negotiation, Erbakan finally dissolved the coalition government in June. In January 1998, the Constitutional Court dissolved Welfare for anti-secular activities and suspended its leading members from active politics.²¹⁷ In the months that followed the NSC meeting, in what came to be known as the '28 February process', the guardians exerted pressure on the parliament to implement new education laws designed to roll back the influence of the *İmam Hatip* schools. The ban on wearing the Islamic headscarf in state universities was enforced for the first time, while a semi-official department established under the military chief of staff, known as the 'Western Working Group' (*Batı Çalışma Grubu*), was tasked with monitoring Islamist activities across state institutions, civil society organisations, universities and the media.²¹⁸

Asked whether the military's ultimatum had meant a coup, General Erol Özkasnak, then secretary of the NSC, responded that coups were a thing of the past: "The military of the twenty-first century acts in accordance to the twenty-first century." But the ultimatum eventually went down in modern Turkish history as the 'post-modern coup', labelled thus by General Çevik Bir, the influential deputy head of the TSK. One of the chief architects of the intervention, General Bir also suggested that the military had merely carried out a "wheel balancing on democracy" (Korucu 2012). In an NSC meeting in January 1999, the newly promoted head of the TSK, General Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, lectured Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit that "28 February is not over. [...] If necessary, it will last a thousand years."²¹⁹ At the turn of the millennium, post-modern guardianship appeared firmly entrenched in Turkey.

²¹⁶ "İşte tarihi değişiklikler", *Hürriyet*, 4 November 1997.

²¹⁷ The decision was subsequently upheld by the European Court of Human Rights. Case of "Refah Partisi (Welfare Party) and Others vs. Turkey", Grand Chamber ruling, 13 February 2003.

²¹⁸ "Military watchdog group monitors spreading fundamentalism", *Turkish Daily News*, 14 June 1997.

²¹⁹ "Kıvrıkoğlu'dan Ecevit'e: '28 Şubat daha bitmedi!'", *Habertürk*, 28 February 2012.

Turkey's lost decade: The beginning of the end?

Contrary to Kivrikoğlu's prediction, the political and institutional arrangement that followed the 1997 intervention was to be unravelled in little more than a decade, following the acceleration of Turkey's EU accession process and the coming to power of the AKP in the early 2000s. Arguably, however, the process of unravelling had already begun in the 1990s, which was a decade of failures, frustrations and crises for many people in Turkey. This was a period of chronic macro-economic problems, characterised by volatile growth, frequent boom-and-bust cycles, periodic balance of payments crises, run-away inflation and devaluations of the local currency, IMF-imposed austerity measures, high levels of unemployment and a widening income gap. Between 1991 and 2001, the country suffered four major economic crises. In the 2001 crisis, the lira collapsed, banks were bailed out, public debt reached three quarters of the GDP and the IMF was once again called upon for rescue (Görmez and Yiğit 2009).

This gloomy economic atmosphere was compounded by a political picture featuring weak coalition governments, political parties that appeared cut off from the public and embroiled in corruption scandals, state collusion in organised crime as well as widespread human rights abuses, especially in the state's 'dirty war' against the PKK in the Kurdish provinces (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu and Yeldan 2000).²²⁰ Marked by the military's scorched earth campaigns, state-sanctioned extra judicial murders of civilians and the TV images of fallen soldiers in coffins wrapped with Turkish flags, the conflict claimed over 40,000 lives and thousands of burnt down villages, and displaced millions of impoverished Kurdish citizens, forcing them settle into ghettos around major urban metropolises in western and southern Turkey, as well as large Kurdish cities such as Diyarbakır.

The Kurdish conflict took a particularly violent turn following the successive deaths of a number of key public figures in 1993: in January,

²²⁰ In a particularly disturbing example of the level of corruption in politics, the two rival centre-right parties of the 1990s, DYP and ANAP, struck a tacit deal in 1997 whereby both parties withdrew support for the parliamentary investigations into corruption allegations implicating their respective leaders. "Çiller ve Yılmaz'a aklama", *Sabah*, 16 Ocak 1997; "Son 'durulama' da tamam", *Radikal*, 12 April 1998.

prominent investigative journalist Uğur Mumcu was assassinated while probing the suspected links between the PKK and the Turkish intelligence. Adnan Kahveci, a liberal politician close to President Turgut Özal and a proponent of a negotiated solution to the Kurdish conflict, was killed in a car crash in February. Only two weeks later, General Eşref Bitlis, the reform-minded commander of the gendarmerie and NSC member, who had publicly criticised the security forces' conduct in the Kurdish provinces, died in a mysterious plane crash. Finally, President Özal passed away in April 1993 of a heart attack, at a critical moment when he was negotiating a settlement with the PKK leadership against the wishes of senior members of the military-bureaucratic establishment. The counter-guerrilla has been suspected to be behind these untimely deaths.²²¹

The extent of the collusion between politics, the security sector and organised crime fully came into public view with another car crash on 3 November 1996. From the wreckage of a Mercedes that collided with a truck near the town of Susurluk in northwest Turkey emerged wounded a minister of parliament representing an influential Kurdish clan that collaborated with the state against the PKK, along with the bodies of a former deputy police chief and an ultra-nationalist mafia boss and assassin sought by the Interpol for drug trafficking and the murders of numerous Kurdish dissidents and businessmen. The group was said to have left a meeting with Mehmet Ağar, then interior minister and founder of the counter-terrorism unit within the police. The public inquiry and the court case that followed the 'Susurluk scandal' fell short of exposing the shadowy connections between the state and the criminal underworld. However, the scandal did trigger one of the first concerted civil society campaigns for justice and transparency in the post-1980 period in Turkey (Barham 1997).

A devastating earthquake hit the country's industrialised northwest region in August 1999, killing by some estimates more than 30,000 people, causing extensive damage to its infrastructure and triggering a new economic

²²¹ The Mumcu assassination was initially blamed on Iran, although no evidence was found. In June 2012, a report by the State Audit Board ruled the circumstances of Özal's death suspicious and that his death may have been caused by poisoning. In September, a state prosecutor ordered his remains to be exhumed for investigation. "Late President Özal's body to be exhumed", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 18 September 2012.

crisis. Once again, civil society initiatives and non-governmental organisations took the leading role in conducting relief efforts. The state's lack of preparation and disorganised response to a long anticipated disaster put its intent and competence to provide for the wellbeing of its citizens under further public doubt (Jalali 2002). The stock market crash of February 2001, which brought about bank bailouts amidst high level corruption scandals and the loss of life-long savings of ordinary citizens, added to growing frustrations. For many people living in Turkey at the end of the 1990s, it seemed that the 'circle of equity' had broken down completely.

Turkey in the 2000s: The EU accession process and the rise of the AKP

Out of the turbulent 1990s, two processes emerged to make a profound impact on Turkey's society and politics, and challenge the institutional hegemony of its guardians in the early 2000s: the European Union accession process and the rise of the Islamist-rooted Justice and Development Party as a popular and highly effective political movement.

Turkey had been seeking European integration officially since the 1960s and applied for full membership of the European Community (the predecessor of the EU) in 1987. But it was the signing of a customs union in 1995 followed by Turkey's formal admission by the European Commission as a candidate for full membership in 1999 that transformed a slow moving bureaucratic process into a tangible prospect that captured the public's imagination and became the primary issue in the country's political agenda. At the turn of the millennium, popular support in Turkey for full membership in the EU rose significantly, with an increasing number of Turkish citizens looking to European integration as a solution to chronic political and economic instabilities.²²² The growing influence of Brussels in Turkey's domestic politics as well as in its relationship with the

²²² Public support for the EU membership in Turkey consistently came out above 50% in opinion polls during the early-to-mid 2000s, reaching a high with 67% in 2004. See EC (2005), Eurobarometer (2005).

West brought to the fore a new liberal reform agenda, gradually replacing the security-focused agenda of its US-centric western ties during and in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War.

The EU accession process entailed the implementation of a wide range of social, economic and political liberalisation programmes by the candidate country within the framework of 'harmonisation packages', monitored closely by the European Commission. By the general election held in April 1999, all mainstream parties, including the far-right Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) and the Islamist Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*, FP; the successor to the banned Welfare Party) had recognised the pursuit of the EU membership as a desired political objective. Until its dissolution in 2002, the unlikely coalition government that emerged from the 1999 election, made up of the centre-left Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*, DSP), the nationalist MHP and the centre-right ANAP, put in place a number of key political reforms.²²³ These included 34 amendments to the 1982 Constitution, the drafting of a new civil code, revised anti-terrorism legislation, the abolishment of the death penalty, the easing of cultural restrictions on minorities and the permission to broadcast in languages other than Turkish (Müftüler Bac 2005).

Partly as a consequence of the economic crisis, by mid-2002 the coalition government had collapsed, with an early election called for November. In that poll, voters punished all the major parties that had played a role in the crises and tribulations of the 1990s, leaving them below the 10% election threshold and therefore out of the parliament. The only two parties to pass the threshold were the CHP, with 19% of the vote, and the newly established AKP, which secured 34%. Controlling 363 seats in the 550-seat parliament, the AKP went on to form Turkey's first single-party government since Özal's ANAP in 1987. However, representing only 53% of the overall vote due to the high election threshold, the 2002 Assembly also exposed the underlying democratic deficit of the post-1980 institutional arrangement.

²²³ The apprehension of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan by Turkish intelligence agents in Nairobi in 1999 (in collaboration with the Israeli and American secret services) provided the DSP, then the junior coalition partner of ANAP, and the MHP with a popularity boost, propelling the two parties to first and second place in the general election respectively. The PKK ceasefire that followed the apprehension led to an extended period of lull in violence, creating a favourable political environment for political reform.

The core founders of the AKP consisted of a younger generation of Islamist politicians, who rose from among Welfare ranks but split from the senior leadership upon the formation of Virtue on ideological and practical grounds in the aftermath of the 1997 intervention.²²⁴ Labelled the 'reformist wing' of the Islamist party politics in the late 1990s, this group concluded that direct ideological confrontation with the military-bureaucratic establishment had, on the one hand, limited their movement's popular appeal and, on the other hand, triggered a heavy-handed response from the guardians. Abandoning their predecessors' intense anti-secularist rhetoric, they went on to emphasise a pragmatic service-based politics at home, focusing on economic growth, political stability, good governance and better provision of social services. At the same time, they sought to placate domestic and western suspicions that they would seek an anti-western foreign policy by underlining the party's commitment to maintain and strengthen Turkey's engagements with NATO and the EU.²²⁵

In other words, by choosing 'pragmatic conservatism' over 'ideological Islamism', the founders of the AKP moved from the contested frontiers of the 'tolerated' political space in Turkey, where Welfare had operated, to the fertile and 'permissible' grounds of centre-right politics, occupied in the past by popular parties such as the DP and ANAP. At a moment when the centre-right parties of the post-1980 coup era had been discredited and pushed out of parliamentary politics by the electorate, this timely shift provided the newly established AKP with a virtually uncontested political space and substantial electoral support. In particular, the party obtained the backing of three influential groups, which came to form an informal coalition in the early 2000s: the (above mentioned) emerging class of conservative Anatolian entrepreneurs, united and mobilised through Islamic fraternities and trust networks, the most influential of which is the Hizmet movement led by US-based Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen;²²⁶ a small

²²⁴ See "Part I: The AKP's history, ideology, social bases and organisation" in Hale and Özbudun (2010: 1 – 52).

²²⁵ See the party's 2002 election manifesto, AKP (2002).

²²⁶ The Hizmet movement leads one of the two main branches of political Islam in Turkey, known as *Nurculuk*. This branch seeks to reconcile western modernity with Islam, encourages social and economic entrepreneurship over political activism and is sometimes referred to as the 'pragmatic' alternative to Erbakan's more 'ideological' *Milli Görüş* (National View) movement, from which Erdoğan and the AKP emerged. The rivalry between the two branches in the 1990s was such that Gülen actually supported the coup against Erbakan in 1997. The AKP's departure

but vocal 'liberal intelligentsia', many members of which had belonged to leftist groups and movements in the 1960s and 70s;²²⁷ as well as populous yet politically disunited and less coherent pockets of pious Sunni Turks and Kurds.

At the turn of the millennium, this informal alliance came to see military-bureaucratic guardianship as the chief impediment to political and economic change in Turkey, and the pursuit of the EU membership as the way to overcoming it (Akkoyunlu, Nicolaidis and Öktem 2013: 17). While the conservative masses provided the AKP with the bulk of its electoral support, the Anatolian bourgeoisie constituted its financial backbone. At the same time, followers of the Hizmet movement who started to rise within the state bureaucracy, judiciary and the police in the 1990s and 2000s provided the AKP with strategic support and resources from within the very institutions over which the guardians wished to maintain their hegemony. The Gülenists succeeded in maintaining a quiet presence in key state institutions after the 1997 intervention, when the Kemalist guardians set out to stem the movement's growth through the Western Working Group, launched a court case against Gülen in absentia in 2000, and issued a confidential NSC advisory in 2004 aimed at countering its politico-economic activities. (Berlinski 2012; Daloğlu 2013).

Finally, the backing of the liberal intelligentsia helped the party build a less intimidating public image than Welfare in the eyes of non-pious citizens of Turkey. At home, the liberals strove to balance off the socially conservative impulses of the party's core constituency by insisting on a reform agenda in line with the EU accession process.²²⁸ The intelligentsia also helped the governing party secure the support of the EU in its domestic struggle against the military-

from the ideological politics of *Milli Görüş* brought the party and Gülen's Hizmet movement together in the early 2000s. See Ebaugh (2009), Özdalga (2003), Yavuz and Esposito (2003).

²²⁷ Not all those associated with this group actually called themselves as liberals or saw themselves as part of an intelligentsia. They were collectively branded so by their leftist and Kemalist critics (and following the liberal-conservative split, also by the Islamists) who typically used the term in a derogatory manner to imply a bourgeois detachment from the people and a sense of materialistic opportunism. Needless to say, I use the term without such undertones. Rather, I find it both practical and also appropriate, as these scholars, journalists, artists and novelists became vocal supporters of the EU's 'liberal democratisation' agenda in the early 2000s.

²²⁸ One example is the debate over the criminalisation of adultery. The government floated the idea during 2005 but backtracked when faced with united resistance from the EU, the liberals and the Kemalists. In these early years, the AKP would often point to the institutional and political constraints imposed by the EU and the guardians to justify to their conservative constituents why they did not push a more religious social agenda.

bureaucratic guardians by defending the AKP's reforms from a liberal democratic perspective abroad.

It was not only with Brussels that the AKP built positive relations during its first term in government. The changing geopolitical conjuncture of the Middle East also brought the party in close strategic cooperation with Washington in the post-September 11 context. Neo-conservative strategists in the George W. Bush administration as well as influential foreign policy pundits in the US started to view and promote Turkey's governing party as a 'moderate Muslim antidote' to radical Islamist movements, which the US administration had designated as the target of its self-styled 'war on terror' in the early 2000s. Popularly elected, pro-western in geopolitical orientation and liberal in economic policy, Turkey's 'moderate Islamists' came to represent the ideal model to be supported against both radical Sunni movements like al-Qaeda and the revisionist anti-westernism of Iran.²²⁹ The US government endorsed this viewpoint explicitly within the framework of its 'Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative', a democracy promotion project adopted by the G8 at the Sea Island summit in June 2004.²³⁰ Speaking at a NATO conference in Istanbul a few weeks later, President Bush described Turkey as a model "Muslim country, which embraces democracy, rule of law and freedom".²³¹

Mindful of the Kemalist establishment's suspicions of its Islamist roots and intentions, the AKP government insisted on being described as a 'conservative democratic' party in a similar vein as Europe's Christian democrats, instead of 'moderate Islamists'. However, the party's representation by the US foreign policy circles as a model to the wider region did resonate with its leading ideologues, especially with the vision of then foreign policy advisor (and future foreign minister) Ahmet Davutoğlu. As explained in his book *Strategic Depth*, Turkey in Davutoğlu's vision had to become an 'order setting agent' at the centre of a wide geography spanning from the Balkans to the Middle

²²⁹ For example, describing Turkey as a "free society [...] which has always embraced religious pluralism" and its "moderate branch of [...] Islam" as the "real Islam", Thomas Friedman (2004) argued: "if we want to help moderates win the war of ideas within the Muslim world, we must help strengthen Turkey as a model of democracy, modernism, moderation and Islam all working together."

²³⁰ "Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative", US Department of State Archive 2005 – 2009, <http://bmena.state.gov>

²³¹ Quoted in Altunışık (2005: 46). Also see Bağcı and Kardaş (2004: 429 – 432).

East, drawn together by intensifying economic and diplomatic ties and a shared cultural (i.e. religious) and historical heritage, dating to the Ottoman Empire (Davutoğlu 2001). Addressing the neo-conservative think tank American Enterprise Institute in January 2004, Prime Minister Erdoğan echoed this vision in these words:

Turkey in its region and especially in the Middle East will be a guide in overcoming instability, a driving force for economic development, and a reliable partner in ensuring security [...] I do not claim, of course, that Turkey's experience is a model that can be implemented identically in all other Muslim societies. However, the Turkish experience does have a substance which can serve as a source of inspiration for other Muslim societies, other Muslim peoples." (Yavuz 2006: Appendix 1, 337)

In short, backed by the liberal-conservative alliance and a surging popular demand for the pursuit of the EU membership at home, and by Turkey's two traditional western counterparts abroad, the Islamist-rooted governing party pressed on with the process of political and economic reform that had started in the aftermath of the 2001 financial crisis (Müftüler Bac 2005: 21). The momentum of the AKP's EU-backed reforms was at its highest during the party's first three years in government. Within weeks assuming office, in December 2002, the AKP-dominated parliament passed two legal reform packages that operationalised reforms passed into law by the previous government, revised the penal code to eradicate systematic torture, and called for the retrial of all past cases decided in the SSCs. These courts were abolished altogether in May 2004. Furthermore, in 2002, the government lifted the emergency laws that had been in place in the Kurdish provinces since 1987. In 2003, the parliament ratified two UN conventions, which Turkey had previously expressed reservations about, strengthening the protection of civil liberties and cultural rights (Müftüler Bac 2004: 25 – 27).²³²

²³² There are the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. However, Turkey maintained some reservations to the latter convention, mainly regarding women's and minorities' socio-economic rights.

The most critical EU-backed initiative that aimed directly at the institutions of the guardian state was the restructuring of the powerful National Security Council. Between August and December 2003, the Turkish GNA passed laws that increased the number of civilian members of the Council, tipping the balance in the civilians' favour for the first time. The AKP also successfully curtailed the NSC secretary general's influence over the cabinet and the parliament. The first non-military secretary general of the NSC was appointed in August 2004. Writing on the eve of the first NSC reforms, Berkan (2003) argued:

If we were to search for a 'deep state' in Turkey, without applying a positive or negative meaning to the term, until the day before yesterday this would be the NSC General Secretariat. [...] Today this monopoly of information no longer exists. No longer can the NSC general secretary write to ministries and demand classified files, or send them instructions to do this or that. On its own, this is not a sufficient step to democratise Turkey, but it is a beginning.

Other reforms aimed at rolling back the institutional powers of the guardians included the removal of the NSC representatives from the Turkish Radio Television Corporation, as well as the two monitoring agencies created by the 1982 Constitution: the Higher Council of Radio and Television and the Council of Higher Education. However, these agencies remained in place and continued to serve as the state's controlling arm in media and universities under the civilian government. A judicial reform bill passed in 2003 removed the military courts' ability to try civilians during peacetime.²³³ From 2005 onwards, civilians also acquired a greater influence over the drafting of the new NSPD, whose contents have nevertheless remained confidential. Finally, although there were initiatives to expand the parliament's oversight capabilities over the economic activities of the TSK, their implementation has been problematic due to the persistence of a culture of secrecy within the military as well as a continued reluctance by politicians to scrutinise publicly what has been for decades a taboo subject.²³⁴

²³³ Amendments to Law No. 353, adopted on 7 August 2003. For details see Cizre (2006).

²³⁴ The 'Public Financial Management and Control Law' (Law No. 5018, adopted on 10 December 2003), was passed into law with the aim of expanding financial transparency of state institutions,

These political changes took place at the same time as Turkey's economy became stabilised and inflation was tamed, mainly on the basis of the macroeconomic reforms put in place by the finance minister of the previous coalition government, Kemal Derviş, following the 2001 crisis.²³⁵ Buoyed by the global surge in liquidity in the 2000s, the country attracted unprecedented amounts of foreign direct investment and recovered consistent growth rates. Together with the most extensive privatisation scheme in Turkey's history, which generated nearly as much capital during 2005 and 2006 as in the previous two decades, the incoming foreign direct investment allowed the government to stimulate the economy and support public projects to improve the country's ailing housing, transportation and health infrastructure (OECD 2006; Karataş and Ercan 2008). Coming on the heels of a decade of socio-economic turbulence, the newfound stability and growth contributed to the popular image of the AKP as competent managers of the economy.

As a consequence, the ruling party's share of the vote increased consistently – first to 42% in the local elections held in 2004, and then to 46% in the early general election in June 2007. Under the AKP, Turkey also came closer to realising its European integration goals. A BBC commentary from May 2004 suggested, “The list [of the government's constitutional and legal reforms] is long and impressive. Little if any of this would have come about were it not for Turkey's obsession with EU entry. [...] No one in the Turkish government is taking success for granted, but Turkey seems closer than ever to achieving its European ambitions.”²³⁶ In November 2004 the European Union responded to the government's reform initiatives by launching full membership negotiations with Ankara.

Alongside the political and institutional reforms, another important aspect of this period was the extent to which historical taboos of the state and society came to be discussed and challenged in remarkably candid and heated

but its efficacy was curtailed by subsequent amendments. Similarly, a 2005 bill that would do away with the legal hurdles before the Court of Accounts in carrying out its oversight role into the budget and expenditures of the military passed into law after much delay in December 2010 (Law No. 6085), and only after being watered down to keep the military's financial autonomy largely intact.

²³⁵ “The man Turks trust: Kemal Derviş”, *Economist*, 15 August 2002.

²³⁶ “Turkey edges toward EU goal”, *BBC News*, 18 May 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3723301.stm>.

public discussions that took place in the media, academia and literature. The subjects ranged from deconstructing the official nationalist historiography of the republic and reassessing the demise of Anatolia's non-Muslim communities and heritage in the course of the nation-building process, to examining the causes and consequences of military coups, the guardianship structure and the plight of various socio-economic, religious or ethnic groups suppressed and marginalised by the patriarchal state and society. This was an exceptional – and ultimately somewhat brief – period of political openness that was encouraged by the EU accession process, driven by the liberal intelligentsia, and carefully managed by a governing party that strove to strike a fine balance among the interest of its diverse supporters without overplaying its hand against the guardians.²³⁷ Thus, although Kemalist guardianship was still alive and strong during the first half of the 2000s, it was increasingly on the defensive and divided over how to respond to the growing domestic and international challenges to its authority.

The guardians' dilemma: Reform or resistance?

Shifting attitudes within the guardian state: the rise of Eurasianism

In the late 1990s, the military-bureaucratic guardians of the Kemalist regime appeared confident of their socio-political and institutional hegemony in the unfolding 'post-modern age'. By the mid-2000s, this confidence had largely disappeared as the guardians faced unprecedented political and ideational challenges to their hegemonic position both at home and abroad. As a consequence, in the course of the decade, 'post-modernity' started featuring frequently and prominently among the guardians' list of threats to the Kemalist order. In his inaugural address in August 2008, the new chief of the Turkish military, General Işık Koşaner, summarised what seemed to be the prevalent worldview within the TSK as such:

²³⁷ See Öktem (2011), and "Europeanisation and 'the liberal moment'" in Akkoyunlu, Nicolaidis and Öktem (2013: 20 – 27).

The network of propaganda and influence made up of a post-modern class orchestrated by global powers and nested within the domestic media, certain academic and business circles and civil society organisations, is hard at work to weaken and dissolve our national unity, national values and national security parameters.²³⁸

Koşaner's reference to the 'post-modern class' can be interpreted a thinly veiled reference to the liberal intelligentsia's collaboration with the conservative capitalists at home and with the US and the EU abroad to impose on Turkey a post-modern neo-liberal imperialist project that could only succeed by encouraging ethnic separatism and Islamist reactionism, and by side-lining the guardians of the secular and unitary nation-state.²³⁹ This interpretation suggests a remarkable turnaround in the dominant worldview subscribed to by the guardians within the span of a few years. Not only was it the previous generation of senior officers, in close cooperation with the now maligned global powers who, had encouraged the rise of political Islam at the same time as they forced open the country's economy to global markets in the early 1980s. But it was more or less Koşaner's generation, whose ultimatum to the Welfare-led government in February 1997 had included directives to maintain Turkey's western geopolitical orientation, pursuit of the EU membership and the implementation of free market reforms.²⁴⁰

Instead of being essentially an ideological transformation, then, this relatively sudden shift in attitudes towards westernisation and globalisation in the early 2000s primarily reflected a realisation on the part of the Kemalist guardians that they were losing the strategic backing of the West, which had supported the military's guardianship role since the early years of the Cold War, to the liberal-conservative alliance. Welfare, with its openly hostile rhetoric towards the western security establishment and liberal economic system,

²³⁸ "Topluma müdahale", *Sabah*, 31 August 2008.

²³⁹ For the suggested connection between separatism, religious fundamentalism and post-modernity, see the 2007 speech of Koşaner's predecessor, General İlker Başbuğ. "Komutan postmoderne neden karşı?", *Radikal*, 25 September 2007.

²⁴⁰ According to the leaked text of the ultimatum, the guardians insisted:

- "Turkey's goal to become a full member of the EU must be maintained, without disregarding the negative attitude of some European countries on this matter."
- "Economic efforts to unite Turkey with the outside world, including privatisation schemes, must be intensified." ("İşte tarihi değişiklikler", *Hürriyet*, 4 November 1997).

presented a more straightforward challenge to the Kemalist establishment. The guardians could maintain their strategic relationship with the West, while opposing the Islamists as inherently opposed to Atatürk's legacy of 'entering contemporary civilisation' (and thus justifying an intervention against them). The idea of an Islamist-led European integration project, on the other hand, presented the guardians with a difficult dilemma, pitting their geopolitical priorities against their ideological commitment to westernisation as well as sensitivity to their own public image: how to respond to a widely popular project of European integration and reform driven by a well-supported political party, when it threatens the guardians' institutional hegemony?

An outcome of this dilemma was the re-emergence of one of the key divisions within the Kemalist establishment that dated to İnönü's decision to embed Turkey within the western security alliance in the early years of the Cold War: the division between those who emphasised geopolitical westernisation as the pursuit of the charismatic leader's legacy of 'entering contemporary civilisation', versus those who interpreted this legacy primarily as an anti-imperialist ideology that prioritised national sovereignty above all else. While in the course of the Cold War and during the 1990s, the former tendency outweighed the latter, at the turn of the millennium, with shifting geopolitical dynamics and alliances, the latter became resurgent among the military-bureaucratic guardians and their supporters in civil society, media and academia. The resultant discourse came to be known as *Ulusalcılık*, which translates as nationalism, but with the use of the Turkish word for nation, *ulus*, instead of the Arabic *millet*, which is meant to emphasise an exclusively secular Turkish character. The geostrategic extension of this domestic discourse was *Avrasyacılık* (Eurasianism).²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Despite the extensive overlaps in shared ideas and people, *Ulusalcılık* and *Avrasyacılık* are not synonymous concepts. While an idea of national sovereignty lies at the core of both, not all those who define themselves as *Ulusalcı* necessarily subscribe to the Eurasianist geostrategic worldview. Indeed, a distrust and dislike of Khomeinist Iran and a fear of Russian imperialism limits the appeal of Eurasianism among secular nationalist Turks. *Ulusalcılık* displays a reactionary characteristic in its anti-western, anti-globalisation, anti-liberal, anti-Islamist and anti-Kurdish rhetoric, but does not necessarily embody a tangible geopolitical or socio-economic agenda of its own. In short, while nearly all Eurasianists could be classified as *Ulusalcı*, not all *Ulusalcıs* are Eurasianists.

As a geostrategic discourse, Kemalist Eurasianism brought together two otherwise distinct political groups, which had frequently clashed during the Cold War: various groups of socialists and secular nationalists, who shared an emerging platform of anti-imperialism, anti-westernism, economic nationalism and state-enforced secularism. As a general stance, the Eurasianists defended the preservation of the official Kemalist historiography, and regarded revisionist efforts to come to reassess the state's role in past episodes of mass violence, especially against the Armenians and the Kurds, as a western imperialist ploy to weaken the nationalist regime. Subsequently, they viewed the reform agenda promoted by the western-backed liberal-conservative alliance as a threat against Turkey's national sovereignty and the regime's unitary and secular character.²⁴² Increasingly convinced that Turkey's geopolitical interests no longer lay with the United States and the western security establishment, and inspired in part by Russian geostrategist Alexander Dugin's ideas on establishing a new Eurasian geopolitical space to counter the politico-economic hegemony of the West, the Turkish Eurasianists advocated strategic rapprochement with Russia, China and Iran.²⁴³ This, they argued, was in line with the true principles of Kemalism. As two academic proponents of this idea put it:

We suggest that Kemalism, as it is understood by its adherents today, has never been synonymous with Westernisation, but rather with anti-Imperialism. Indeed, this has always been the main motivation behind the convergence of Kemalists with a segment of the Socialists and sections of the military elite in Turkey. The most recent and important outcome of this convergence is the current support of these groups for Eurasianism, an intellectual movement originally developed by Russian émigrés which rejected a Western-centric understanding and explaining of world history, geography and politics (Akçalı and Perinçek 2009).

²⁴² For a detailed content analysis of the leading Eurasianist publications, see Eren-Webb (2011).

²⁴³ Translated to Turkish, Dugin's works became popular among socialists and secular nationalists, and were reportedly included in the curricula in the War Academy. Dugin established the 'International Eurasianist Movement' in November 2003, of which the Turkish Worker's Party (İşçi Partisi, IP) of Doğu Perinçek became an active member. "Emekli General Nejat Eslen: Demokrasi, Türkiye'nin öncelikli meselesi değil", *Zaman*, 18 July 2008.

Two regional developments in 2003 and 2004 strengthened the appeal of Eurasianism among the Kemalist guardians: the occupation of Iraq by the US military in 2003 and the Annan Plan for the reunification of Cyprus in 2004. The former confirmed existing suspicions that the US had forsaken its strategic partnership with Turkey, found a new ally in Iraq's Kurds and supported their regional aspirations for an independent state (Akçalı and Perinçek 2009: 559), following the GNA's refusal to grant the American military the use of Turkey's territory as a launching pad for the northern front.²⁴⁴ The proposal for Cypriot unification as advocated in the Annan Plan, on the other hand, was opposed by a number of senior figures within the Turkish military as well as by the nationalist leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community, led by Rauf Denktaş, as undermining Turkey's strategic interests and insistence for a two-state solution on the island.²⁴⁵ With these developments in the backdrop, Dugin paid his first visit to Turkey in December 2003, delivering a lecture on Eurasianism at Istanbul University.

Two further events organised in 2004 brought together the leading Eurasianists within the military, politics and the civil society: in September, a conference titled "Turkish, Russian, Chinese and Iranian relationships on the Eurasian axis" held at Istanbul University was chaired by Professor Nur Serter, who went on to become an MP from the CHP in 2007, and featured as keynote speakers, deputy chairman of the CHP Onur Öymen, retired General Tuncer Kılınç, the Worker's Party chairman Doğu Perinçek, alongside the Iranian and Russian ambassadors to Turkey. In his address to the conference, Kılınç, who was known during his time as the NSC general secretary between 2001 and 2003 as a proponent of Turkey's shift away from the West, proposed a 'Eurasian Union', modelled after the EU and led by Turkey, Russia, China and Iran, to

²⁴⁴ See "A partnership at risk?", *Economist*, 10 July 2003; "Rumsfeld Faults Turkey for Barring Use of Its Land in '03 to Open Northern Front in Iraq", *New York Times*, 21 March 2005. For a detailed account of the internal politics of the Iraqi invasion in Turkey as observed by a veteran Ankara journalist, see Bila (2003).

²⁴⁵ The plan, backed by the AKP government, the European Union and a majority of Turkish Cypriots, failed when put to referendum in April 2004, as the majority of Greek Cypriots, led by the nationalist government of Tassos Papadopoulos, voted against it. In 2005, Cyprus was admitted to the EU as a divided island.

counter the hegemonic ambitions of the US and to combat terrorism, ethnic separatism and other disputes in the region.²⁴⁶

A second conference held in Ankara in December was jointly sponsored by Dugin's International Eurasianist Movement, the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (*Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, Türk-İş), the Atatürkist Thought Association (*Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği*, ADD; a leading secular nationalist organisation) and the *Ulusal Kanal* (a TV-channel linked to Perinçek's Worker's Party). Dugin himself was in attendance, alongside former Turkish president Süleyman Demirel, retired former head of the gendarmerie General Şener Eruygur, as well as Kılınç and Perinçek, among others.²⁴⁷ These events provided the opposition to the AKP within the military-bureaucratic establishment and their allies in civil society and politics with a new geopolitical framework and a more coherent political agenda.

Guardianship divided: Reform versus resistance

During the first five years of the AKP government, the growing split within the guardian state between those who saw the ongoing process of change in Turkey as an inevitable product of the post-Cold War order and thought it wiser to adapt to it and those who rejected the change and resisted the loss of power became increasingly visible. As senior military officers, acting and retired, frequently (and uncharacteristically) contradicted each other in public and exchanged thinly veiled criticisms, the carefully maintained reputation of the military as a strictly hierarchical and disciplined institution was undermined. The senior command structure of the TSK reflected this split: at the highest echelon of

²⁴⁶ Speech titled "The Greater Middle East and the future and security of Eurasia", Istanbul, 3 September 2004. In an earlier speech to the War Academy in Istanbul on 7 March 2002, General Kılınç had argued, "Turkey has not seen the tiniest assistance from the European Union in matters concerning its national interests. On the contrary, the EU regards issues that concern Turkey's interests in complete negativity, this is obvious. Russia is in isolation. I believe it would be in Turkey's benefit to engage in a search that includes [Russia] and if possible Iran, without disregarding the US." In 2007, Kılınç called for Turkey to pull out of NATO altogether. "Turkey and its army: Military manoeuvres", *Economist*, 7 July 2007.

²⁴⁷ Shortly after the conference Russian President Vladimir Putin paid a state visit to Turkey, while Dugin travelled to the Turkish-controlled North Cyprus to express support for Denktaş and the nationalists opposed to the UN and EU policies on the island (Akçalı and Perinçek 2009: 562).

power was a group of officers that first became known as activist supporters of the 1960 coup while still students at the War Academy (*Harbiye*) and many of whom went on to play prominent roles in the military's subsequent interventions. Many of the senior officers of the 1990s, such as generals Bir and Kılınç, former gendarmerie commander and intelligence chief Teoman Koman, and the former TSK chief Hakkı Karadayı (1994 -98) belonged to this group.

With the notable exception of the chief of staff between 2002 and 2006, these 'activist' officers dominated the senior command of the TSK in the early 2000s. These included three commanders of the First Army, generals Çetin Doğan (2001 – 2003; also the director of the West Working Group after the 1997 coup), Yaşar Büyükanıt (2003 – 2004) and Hurşit Tolon (2004 – 2005). Generals Eruygur and Tolon were known as the leading proponents of the *Ulusalçı*/Eurasianist camp. Following their retirement in 2004, Tolon and Eruygur, who assumed the leadership of the ADD, continued their active opposition to the AKP government. Although not a part of this group, General İbrahim Fırtına and Admiral Özden Örnek, the air force and navy chiefs between 2003 and 2005, were also closer to the Eurasianists due to their discomfort with the ruling party. These officers did not hide their displeasure with General Hilmi Özkök, the chief of staff of the TSK between 2002 and 2006, who did not belong to the 'activist' group, opposed Eurasianism as a geopolitical blueprint for Turkey and opted for reform rather than resistance, thus often being labelled as an American lackey and a 'closet Islamist' by his critics.²⁴⁸

In many ways, Özkök was a typical Turkish general, sharing the same view of society and threat perception as his fellow officers: his speeches often included declarations of vigilance against ethnic separatism and religious reactionism.²⁴⁹ However, he was also of the view that the Cold War-era guardianship role of the TSK could no longer be sustained in the post-Cold War environment and the military could no longer afford to appear anti-democratic.

²⁴⁸ Internal complaints about Özkök were typically aired through deliberately leaked reports and anonymous criticisms, often published by Mustafa Balbay, a columnist for the secular nationalist daily *Cumhuriyet*. These leaks would then be officially denied by the TSK. Berkan noted at the time: "As journalists, we know when such reports emerge that they will be denied, but that they also represent the views of a particular group [inside the military]. In other words, the reports are both false and true." (2004)

²⁴⁹ See speeches commemorating the 'Victory Day' celebrations, 30 August 2002 and the death of Atatürk, 10 November 2002.

In a notable departure from common practice, under Özkök's leadership, the TSK refrained from declaring an official stance on some of the most pressing issues of the day – including the parliamentary bill on the use of Turkish territory by the US forces ahead of the Iraqi invasion, the Annan Plan referendum on Cyprus and the European Union reforms – thereby allowing the elected government to lead the public debate on these matters. To a question about why the military had remained silent on the failed bill on Iraq, which most of the senior staff – including himself – had privately supported, Özkök replied in a way that defied the traditional notion of guardianship: “We, the soldiers, do not consider ourselves the most knowledgeable in every issue. Had we made a statement with only the security dimension in mind, we could have misled the public.”²⁵⁰ When criticised for his leniency on the governing party, he responded: “I am a democrat, is that a crime?”²⁵¹

Following Özkök's retirement in 2006, the restraint he imposed on the military's political activism waned. His successor, General Büyükanıt brought political activism back to the fore and took a tough stance against the governing party and the liberal-conservative coalition. In March 2007, the weekly political journal *Nokta* published a classified military document listing scores of Turkish journalists according to their ‘levels of loyalty’ to the Kemalist regime.²⁵² The same journal then went on to publish a leaked diary that allegedly belonged to Admiral Örnek, detailing two advanced coup plans against the AKP government in 2004, which were aborted when discovered by Özkök.²⁵³ Shortly afterwards, the offices of *Nokta* were raided by the police upon the directives of the military prosecutor. The magazine was shut down while its editor-in-chief and lead reporter were sued for “insulting and denigrating Turkishness, the republic and the institutions of the state”. The charges were based on the ambiguously worded Article 301 of the Penal Code, which allowed nationalist lawyers and

²⁵⁰ Statement made on 5 March 2003. “İz bıraktı”, *Milliyet*, 28 August 2006. In 2012, Özkök revealed that alongside his own junior staff, he also had to resist demands from the Bush administration to put pressure on the Turkish parliament for the passage of the bill. “ABD 1 Mart tezkeresinde baskı yapmamı istedi!”, *Milliyet*, 4 August 2012.

²⁵¹ “İz bıraktı”, *Milliyet*, 28 August 2006.

²⁵² “Askerin medya notları”, *Radikal*, 8 March 2007.

²⁵³ “İçinden iki darbe girişimi geçen günlük”, *Radikal*, 29 March 2007; “Gen. Eruygur: fervent coup enthusiast”, *Today's Zaman*, 4 July 2008. Örnek claimed the report was a forgery, but there was no official denial from the TSK.

prosecutors to open a barrage of court cases against members of the liberal intelligentsia whom they considered unpatriotic.²⁵⁴ On the eve of a crucial presidential election, the government appeared reluctant to challenge the guardians directly.

2007 proved to be a critical year for the hybrid regime in Turkey. The central issue was the parliamentary election of President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's successor. As the former chief of the Constitutional Court and a staunch Kemalist, Sezer had frequently resorted to his veto power to block draft laws passed by the AKP-dominated GNA and often served as a break on the government's reform attempts. Alongside its powers over the parliament (which were admittedly limited: for instance, the president could not veto the same bill twice) and ability to appoint key members of the bureaucracy and high judiciary, the presidency long carried a symbolic importance as a 'stronghold' of Kemalist guardianship. Therefore the government's nomination of then Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, the prominent founding member of the AKP and a politician with a long history in political Islam, against the military's wishes, constituted a direct affront to the institutional and ideological hegemony of the guardians. The Kemalist guardians and their civilian supporters attempted to resist an 'Islamist takeover' of the presidency in three interconnected ways: obstruction of the parliamentary process supported by the Constitutional Court, mass demonstrations and a military ultimatum.

On 27 April, MPs from the opposition CHP boycotted the first round of voting and appealed to the Constitutional Court to annul the outcome (in which Gül had fallen ten votes short of a straight victory, taking the election to a second round) on the grounds that the parliament had failed to reach the necessary two-thirds quorum. Following the vote at midnight, a statement appeared on the official website of the TSK, expressing "grave concern" over "recent debates about secularism surrounding the presidential election process". The statement reasserted the military's guardianship role as "the absolute defender of secularism" and emphasised its "legal duty" to take the necessary action to

²⁵⁴ They were eventually acquitted of the charges. Other high profile figures taken to court under article 301 during the mid-2000s include novelist Orhan Pamuk, academic Murat Belge and Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink.

protect the “fundamental values” of the republic.²⁵⁵ Senior CHP figures and prominent Eurasianists praised what was an ultimatum to the government, which has been commonly referred to as the ‘e-memorandum’.²⁵⁶ While these developments took place, mass demonstrations against Gül’s candidacy were held in major urban centres throughout April and May. These were co-organised by the ADD and the secularist ‘Association in Support of Contemporary Living’ (*Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Vakfı*, ÇYD). Some of the popular slogans from these rallies included: “Neither the US, nor the EU, fully sovereign Turkey”, “We do not want an Imam for president”, “We are Mustafa Kemal’s soldiers”, as well as the less audible “Neither sharia, nor *coup d’état*; we demand a fully democratic Turkey”, suggesting that not all demonstrators were in favour of a military intervention.²⁵⁷

The government’s immediate response to the e-memorandum was one of caution, but also – unlike Welfare in 1997 – a refusal to back down.²⁵⁸ This refusal grew more resolute as it became apparent that, for the first time in its long history of interventions, the guardians had managed to secure neither enough public support nor the backing of the West: on 28 April, the EU commissioner for enlargement, Olli Rehn, cautioned the military to respect democratic values and processes.²⁵⁹ The official US response was rather mixed and muted, yet on balance unsupportive of the generals’ move.²⁶⁰ In May, shortly after the Constitutional Court announced the annulment of the first round of the vote in line with the opposition’s appeal, the government withdrew Gül’s candidacy and called for an early general election.

²⁵⁵ “Excerpts of Turkish army statement”, *BBC News*, 28 April 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6602775.stm>.

²⁵⁶ CHP deputy chairman Onur Öymen praised the statement, adding that his party shared the TSK’s concerns on secularism. Addressing a rally the following day, the ADD vice president Nur Serter said: “Long live the Turkish army! On 27 April, the Turkish army heard our voice, supported our voice and supported democracy. [...] It supported the true will of the Turkish Republic.” See “CHP Genel Başkan Yardımcısı: Dayatmayla cumhurbaşkanı seçmek istiyorlar”, *Hürriyet*, 28 April 2007; “Prof. Nur Serter: Ordumuz 27 Nisan’da demokrasiye sahip çıktı”, *Hürriyet*, 30 April 2007.

²⁵⁷ “One million Turks rally against government”, *Reuters*, 29 April 2007.

²⁵⁸ For the full text of the AKP spokesman’s response: “Cemil Çiçek’in açıklamasının tam metni”, *NTVMSNC*, 28 April 2007.

²⁵⁹ “Turkish army statement sparks EU concern”, *EUobserver*, 30 April 2007, <http://euobserver.com/news/23962>.

²⁶⁰ “For the first time, US warns against army intervention”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 4 May 2007.

The AKP won the general election held in July 2007 with a wider than predicted margin, increasing its share of the vote by 12% from 2002 (but losing 22 seats based on proportional distribution, as the new parliament also featured 71 new MPs from the MHP and 26 mostly Kurdish independents). While the CHP's vote remained static, the party lost 66 seats in total. The rise in the AKP's support did not only come as a verdict on its five-year record, but also as an expression of public approval of its stance on the presidential election – at least this is how the governing party and its supporters interpreted and framed the outcome. Buoyed by the victory, the government re-nominated Gül as its candidate for the presidency, and with the participation and partial backing of the MHP delegates, succeeded in getting him elected as Turkey's first Islamist-rooted president in August 2007. The successive election defeats came as a blow to the guardian state and its *Ulusalçı*/Eurasianist wing. Marking the historical significance of Gül's election, Ertuğrul Özkök, then editor of the daily *Hürriyet*, declared him "the first president of the second republic" (2007).

One final act of resistance from the guardians came the following year, when Abdurrahman Yalçınkaya, the chief state prosecutor, brought charges against the ruling party on the grounds of engaging in anti-secular activities, demanding its closure and a ban from politics on its senior members. As in the case of the e-memorandum, the CHP expressed support for the chief prosecutor's request, with its leader Deniz Baykal admitting that "the judiciary is all we have left" (Kürkçü 2008). On 31 July 2008, the Constitutional Court ruled, with five votes to six, against the chief prosecutor's demands.²⁶¹ The ruling displayed the existence of similar divisions within the high judiciary regarding resistance and reform as within the military. The court did find the AKP guilty of damaging secularism, but decided to impose a monetary fine instead of closure; a much lighter punishment, apparently produced in part as a result of some of the judges' reluctance to upset Turkey's delicate political stability and macro-economic balance – especially given the fact that the AKP enjoyed larger popular support than its outlawed predecessors, Welfare and Virtue. Having previously expressed concern over the case, the European Union and the financial markets,

²⁶¹ Although a simple majority of the judges voted in favour of closure, this was one vote less than the necessary qualified majority.

both of which evolved into independent pressure mechanisms that decision makers in Turkey have found difficult to ignore, reacted positively to the ruling.²⁶²

Also noteworthy was the influence of Chief Justice Haşim Kılıç on the panel. Kılıç was a conservative judge who was appointed by then President Özal to the Constitutional Court in 1990. President Gül appointed him to the head of this court in October 2007. Between 1990 and 2009 Kılıç voted on 18 closure cases, in 14 of which he supported closure. All of these 14 parties were of leftist and/or Kurdish political orientation. Three of the four cases where he had voted against closure were those of the Welfare, the Virtue and, in 2008, the AKP (Çelik 2013). On the AKP case, he was the only judge on the panel to vote both against closure and monetary fine. The presence of Kılıç at the head of the Constitutional Court at such a critical moment demonstrated the lasting impact on state institutions of the post-1980 reorientation of Turkey in an economically liberal and politically conservative direction, first under the military junta and then under the political leadership of Turgut Özal.

The various domestic and international challenges against the guardians' institutional and socio-political authority between 2002 and 2008 were markedly steeper than those it was faced with during the 1990s: as the main vehicle of these challenges, the ruling AKP was not only more popular at home than its Islamist predecessors, but it had also managed to win over the backing of Turkey's western partners, the traditional allies of the military-bureaucratic establishment. Faced with this predicament, the guardian state appeared increasingly and visibly divided. The presence of two individuals that erred on the side of reform rather than resistance (namely, General Özkök and Chief Justice Kılıç) at the helm of the two key guardianship institutions at these critical junctures played a decisive role in favour of the elected government and contributed to the eventual collapse of the hybrid regime.

²⁶² "Rehn warns Turkey on closure case against ruling party", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 29 March 2008; "AKP case depresses Istanbul stock market", *Financial Times*, 1 April 2008; "Financial markets welcome Turkish court's decision not to close AKP", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 1 August 2008.

Resistance suppressed: The fall of the hybrid regime

Having survived two coup plans in the early 2000s, a military ultimatum in 2007 and a closure case in 2008, the governing party moved swiftly to take its fate into its own hand. Between 2008 and 2011, as the AKP went on to wrest control of the remaining institutions of the state, the hybrid structure of the Kemalist regime collapsed. The mechanisms through which resistance within the military-bureaucratic establishment was suppressed included two high profile court cases handled by Heavy Penal Courts against the *Ulusalcı*/Eurasianist camp and a far-reaching restructuring of the judicial system.²⁶³ Equally significant was the role of the media during this period in challenging the military guardians' sacrosanct popular image and untarnished reputation.

The court cases: Ergenekon and Balyoz

Following the Constitutional Court's ruling, the governing party put its weight behind a criminal investigation that had started the previous year into a suspected 'clandestine ultra-nationalist network' embedded within the security establishment, civil society and the criminal underworld. Named after the mythical place of origin of the Turkic people, prosecutors claimed that the so-called 'Ergenekon' terror organisation had been planning political assassinations, bomb attacks in public places, organised riots and mass demonstrations to create an atmosphere of socio-political instability that would justify a military takeover; methods all too reminiscent of the psychological warfare tactics employed by the TSK's Special Warfare Department in advance of *coups d'état*.

Launched following the discovery of a hidden cache of arms and explosives linked to two retired officers in June 2007, the Ergenekon investigation was eventually merged with other ongoing criminal cases, including bombing of the secularist daily *Cumhuriyet* and the fatal attack targeting the Council of State (*Danıştay*) following a ruling upholding the headscarf ban in public offices in

²⁶³ Established in June 2005, the Heavy Penal Courts (also known as Specially Authorised Courts, *Özel Yetkili Mahkemeler*) dealt exclusively with organised crime and terrorism cases. The extensive authority of the prosecutors and judges in these courts are reminiscent of the SSCs.

2006.²⁶⁴ Prosecutors also suggested links between the network and a series of assassinations targeting non-Muslims, including the murders of a Greek Orthodox priest and three Protestant missionaries in 2006, as well as Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in January 2007, whose death had triggered mass demonstrations against the culture of impunity and xenophobic nationalism within the state.²⁶⁵ The first indictment in July 2008 implicated 86 people with conspiring against the government, including several retired officers and well-known *Ulusalçı*/Eurasianist public figures such as the Worker's Party chairman Doğu Perinçek, ultra-nationalist lawyer Kemal Kerinçsiz, journalist İlhan Selçuk and former president of Istanbul University Kemal Alemdaroğlu.

Coinciding with the highly anticipated final days of the closure case, the timing of the indictment revealed the intensity of the power struggle during the summer of 2008 within the state bureaucracy between the government and followers of the Gülen's Hizmet movement on one side and the *Ulusalçı*/Eurasianist guardians on the other. But it was the second and the third indictments, accepted in March and August 2009, that expanded the scope of the trial significantly and covered, among other allegations, the aborted coup plans of 2003 and 2004. These indictments followed the detainment and arrest of retired generals, including Eruygur, Kılınç and Tolon, along with academics, journalists and civil society activists, increasing the total number of suspects in the case to nearly 200.²⁶⁶

From its inception, the Ergenekon trial exposed and indeed hastened the ongoing polarisation of Turkey's society into two seemingly irreconcilable political camps. The secular nationalist opponents of the AKP immediately declared the investigation politically motivated and the evidence fabricated, while members of the ruling party and many of its staunch supporters in the media and civil society deliberately and categorically ignored the presumed innocence of the defendants until proven guilty. In the ensuing race to win over

²⁶⁴ "Ergenekon ile Danıştay davaları birleştirildi", *Sabah*, 4 August 2009.

²⁶⁵ "Zirve, Hrant ve Santoro Ergenekon işi", *Aksiyon*, 22 October 2012. Only one of these cases, the murder of three Protestant missionaries in the eastern city of Malatya, was formally linked with the Ergenekon investigation.

²⁶⁶ Many of these journalists and activists worked for *Ulusalçı*/Eurasianist media organs (*Ulusal Kanal*, *Oda TV*) and civil society groups (the ÇYD and the ADD). "Emekli Org. Tolon ve Eruygur gözaltında", *Hürriyet*, 2 July 2008.

public opinion, Prime Minister Erdoğan declared himself as the unofficial 'prosecutor' of the case, in response to which the CHP leader Deniz Baykal labelled himself as the defendants' lawyer. Although eventually blurred by the rising level of political manipulation, for many ordinary Turks and Kurds, the investigations at this early stage appeared as an unprecedented and historic opportunity to push back the uncontrolled powers of the guardian state, which had become especially overbearing since the 1980 coup, and expose and cleanse the state of its extra-legal criminal elements, which played a role in some of the darkest chapters of Turkey's recent history, from the Susurluk incident to the systematic human rights abuses of the 1990s; i.e. a belated 'Operation Gladio'.

In early 2010, a separate investigation was launched into reports of another alleged plan to topple the government, referred to as operation 'Balyoz' (or Sledgehammer).²⁶⁷ The plan's details, involving the bombing of historical mosques in Istanbul and provoking a conflict with Greece on the Aegean Sea, which were allegedly discussed during a First Army staff seminar in March 2003.²⁶⁸ Between early 2010 and late 2011 a total of 365 suspects were charged with conspiring against the government. All (except one) of the suspects were retired or serving officers who had taken part in the seminar or were believed to have been informed of its contents. Among the detainees were General Çetin Doğan, the chief of the First Army at the time of the seminar and the prime suspect in the case, as well as retired General Firtına and Admiral Örnek, the author of the 'coup diaries' published by *Nokta* in 2007. Like the Ergenekon case, the Balyoz case was also handled by a Heavy Penal Court as a 'terrorism' trial.

The newspaper that publicised most of these allegations played a key role in revealing the incriminating evidence that formed the backbone of the Ergenekon and Balyoz indictments. Founded after the closure of *Nokta* in 2007, and featuring a list of prominent journalists and columnists from the left-liberal intelligentsia, the daily *Taraf* quickly became the source of some of the most unreserved criticisms of the military's non-democratic guardianship role.²⁶⁹ It

²⁶⁷ "Darbenin adı Balyoz", *Taraf*, 20 January 2010.

²⁶⁸ The military acknowledged that such discussions took place during the seminar, but insisted that they were part of a routine 'war scenario' and did not constitute a coup plan.

²⁶⁹ Some of the prominent names were editor-in-chief Ahmet Altan, Murat Belge, journalist Yasemin Çongar and former chief editor of *Nokta*, Alper Görmüş.

was to this newspaper, and particularly to one of its reporters, that sources inside the police force, state bureaucracy and military, who were close to the government and the Hizmet movement, or simply opposed to the Eurasianist faction's influence among the guardians, started leaking classified documents about the secretive internal world of the TSK. These leaks included not only allegations of anti-government activism, but also gross misconduct, inefficiency and oversight, leading in some instances to the deaths of military personnel.²⁷⁰ Almost single-handedly, *Taraf's* reporting challenged the TSK's long established reputation as Turkey's most successful, patriotic and professional institution.²⁷¹ The guardians and the secularist opposition accused *Taraf's* reporters and columnists of being funded by the liberal Soros foundation and the Gülen network and launched numerous court cases against them.²⁷²

In July 2011, the entire military senior command, led by the Chief of the General Staff Işık Koşaner, resigned in protest over the sheer number and the lengthy incarceration of the members of the TSK. In a written statement, Koşaner highlighted the general staff's inability to protect the military personnel in the face of what he described as an unlawful and politically motivated legal process.²⁷³ This was indeed no less than a remarkable admission of defeat by the country's once powerful military guardians, which came shortly after a senior member of the CHP had expressed disappointment with the generals' failure to defend the interests of the Kemalist regime: "We thought they were soldiers," deputy chairman Süheyl Batur said in a speech delivered at an ADD meeting,

²⁷⁰ Most notably, on at least three occasions the paper claimed that serious oversight of intelligence and failures in the chain of command had led to the avoidable casualties in clashes with the PKK. See *Taraf* reports by Mehmet Baransu, "Dağlıca baskını biliniyordu" 24 June 2008; "Aktütün'ü itiraf edin demiştik... Biz açıklıyoruz"; 14 October 2008, and "Hantepe ile Gediktepe ihmalleri", 17 August 2010.

²⁷¹ For many years, the TSK led public opinion polls as Turkey's most trusted institution. At the height of *Taraf's* reporting in the late 2000s, this confidence appeared to be shaken. In a number of national polls, the percentage of those who thought that the military was the most trusted institution declined. In at least one poll (by Metropoll) it was ranked after the presidency, while in another (by Genar), it came after the presidency, the parliament and somewhat surprisingly, the police force. See Genar (2012) and Sencar (2013).

²⁷² See "Org. Başbuğ: TSK'nın üzerinden elinizi çekin!", *NTVMSNBC*, 26 June 2009, <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/24978697/>. "One More Trial for Taraf Newspaper upon 'Aktütün' News", *Bianet English*, 1 October 2009, <http://bianet.org/english/english/117360-one-more-trial-for-taraf-newspaper-upon-aktutun-news>.

²⁷³ "Koşaner'den veda mesajı", *Sabah*, 29 July 2011.

“but turns out [the military] was a paper tiger. Turns out the US simply carved a hole in it. They were able to fell that gigantic tree within seconds.”²⁷⁴

Another previously unthinkable development took place in January 2012, when a former military chief of staff, General İlker Başbuğ (2008 – 2010), was arrested on charges of “forming and leading a terrorist organisation” in conjunction with the Ergenekon trial. The primary accusation against Başbuğ was his knowledge of another confidential plan, the so-called “Action Plan to Combat Reaction”, drawn up by a serving colonel in April 2009 with an aim to manipulate public opinion against the AKP government and the Hizmet movement.²⁷⁵ In September 2012, amidst clashes between the police and anti-government protestors outside the high security courthouse, the judges in the Balyoz trial found 322 of the suspects guilty of the charges and delivered prison sentences between five and 20 years.²⁷⁶ Similar dramatic scenes unfolded in August 2013, when the same court reached a verdict in the Ergenekon trial, sentencing 275 suspects to prison. Başbuğ, Eruygur and Tolon were given life sentences.

The constitutional referendum of September 2010

Contemporaneous with the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials, the AKP government presented to the parliament a constitutional reform package, which was put to national referendum on 12 September 2010. The package contained a wide range of amendments to the 1982 Constitution, including improvements in the protection of individual privacy, freedom of speech and various social, economic and labour rights in line with the European Union requirements. By scheduling the referendum to coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the 1980 coup, the government aimed to present it as a vote between the old ‘authoritarian’ Turkey and the new ‘democratic’ one. Indeed, one of the proposed amendments was to

²⁷⁴ “Batum's ‘military turns out to be paper tiger’ remark triggers outrage”, *Today's Zaman*, 9 February 2011.

²⁷⁵ Mehmet Baransu, “AKP ve Gülen'i bitirme planı”, *Taraf*, 12 June 2009. “Ergenekon'da delil uçuşumu”, *Milliyet*, 17 October 2012.

²⁷⁶ The three most senior officers, Doğan, Fırtına and Örnek were handed life sentences, which were subsequently reduced to 20 years in prison.

scrap the provisional Article 15 of the 1982 Constitution, which granted legal immunity to the perpetrators of past coups. The day after the reform package was approved by 58% of the voters in the referendum, state prosecutors launched an investigation against the aging leaders of the 1980 coup, former generals Kenan Evren and Tahsin Şahinkaya, with a formal indictment brought against the duo in January 2012.²⁷⁷ This was followed by the arrests of 31 people as part of an investigation into the ‘post-modern’ coup of 1997. Among them was General Bir, the mastermind of the intervention.²⁷⁸

The constitutional amendments enabled a further shift in the civil-military balance in the civilian government’s favour, especially in the field of the judiciary. The changes restricted the military courts’ ability to try civilians, while expanding the civilian courts’ remit in trying military personnel in cases involving crimes against the state, including coup plotting; an amendment with direct impact on the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials. Another amendment granted former officers dismissed from the TSK by the Supreme Military Council (*Yüksek Askeri Şura*, YAŞ) the right to appeal, opening the way for those who were expelled from the military on suspicions of ‘anti-secular tendencies’ after 1997 to resume their duties.²⁷⁹

The package provoked controversy mainly over its proposals to restructure the civilian judiciary. The proposed amendments were intended to open up what constitutional law expert Ergun Özbudun labelled the “Kemalist juristocracy”, i.e. the system of close-circuit recruitment and appointment of judges and prosecutors by and within an exclusive class of secular nationalist guardians that have dominated the judiciary and the bureaucracy (2011: 32; Shambayati and Kirdiş 2009; Ergil 2010). The government’s proposal to break this system included granting greater authority to the president and the parliament in the appointment of judges and prosecutors. In other words, while the proposed changes sought to end the Kemalist guardians’ influence over the courts, the increased powers of the legislative and the executive branches over

²⁷⁷ “Turkey 1980 coup leader Kenan Evren goes on trial”, *Guardian*, 4 April 2012.

²⁷⁸ By late 2013 all the top suspects had been released from custody. “Five more released in Feb 28 trial, no arrested suspect left”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 19 December 2013.

²⁷⁹ By December 2012, 690 of over 2,000 officers expelled by the Supreme Military Court (mainly following the 1997 intervention) had been reinstated to public service. “Kaç YAŞ mağduru memuriyete döndü?” *Zaman*, 8 December 2012.

the judiciary risked undermining the democratic separation of powers in a non-hybrid setting. The critics of these proposals argued that they would merely replace one class of politicised judges and prosecutors with another and allow single-party governments to pack the courts with their own supporters (Yeğinsu 2010; Kalaycıoğlu 2012).

The restructuring that followed the 2010 referendum brought to an end the Kemalists' decades-long hegemony over the judiciary, while the high profile trials enabled the government to establish its authority over the military. Whereas the TSK's traditionally sacrosanct image as the selfless servants of the nation came under increasing scrutiny in the course of this process, the AKP's growing popularity was reconfirmed when it won a third consecutive general election victory in June 2011, securing one out of every two votes cast.

Conclusion

At the turn of the millennium, more than a decade of political and economic instability in Turkey led to growing popular expectations for change, which became manifest in the surging public support for the European Union membership. New dynamics also spawned new political alliances, namely, the liberal-conservative coalition that supported the EU-driven politico-economic reform process and the leftist-secular nationalist coalition that resisted it. At the same time, in a historic re-alignment of geopolitical interests, the West shifted its support from the Kemalist guardians to the liberal-conservative coalition led by the AKP. With the domestic support of an increasing portion of the electorate, the liberal intelligentsia and a new class of conservative entrepreneurs and bureaucrats with links to the Hizmet movement, the AKP successfully challenged the institutional hegemony of the military-bureaucratic guardians.

The guardians' defeat came about gradually, through the course of three general elections, the EU-backed institutional reforms between 2003 and 2005, the presidential election of 2007, the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases starting in 2008, and the presidential and constitutional referenda of 2007 and 2010,

respectively. Of crucial importance to the outcome of this power struggle were the divisions among the guardians as regards the course of action to be taken in response to the changing status quo. These internal disagreements, which reflected the general division within society between reform and resistance, split open the institutions of guardianship, ultimately benefitting the liberal-conservative alliance.

While reviewing this process of change in Turkey, it is important to resist the temptation to reduce a complex process to a binary struggle between forces of authoritarianism and democracy, or between good and evil, as rival political camps in and outside of Turkey so persistently do. As I noted in Chapter 1, these pillars are not monolithic and a victory of the democratic pillar over the guardians does not guarantee improvements in civil liberties and competitiveness. Indeed, the tentative outcome of the ongoing process that has led to the collapse of the hybrid regime in Turkey has also been complex and yet at the same time thoroughly alarming from the perspective of substantial democracy. This will be the subject of the second half of Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

BEYOND AND BACK TO THE HYBRID REGIME

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I re-defined hybrid regime as an institutional arrangement in which sovereignty is divided between a guardianship pillar and a democratic pillar. For a system to be hybrid, this duality needs to be in place and both pillars need to possess practical autonomy and authority; in other words, they should not be merely ceremonial. I also suggested that when one of these pillars disappears or loses its practical autonomy and authority, the system no longer becomes hybrid (hypothesis four). But a transition into democracy is not guaranteed even if the electoral pillar triumphs over the guardianship pillar, just as a return to hybridity in either case cannot be ruled out if the post-hybrid institutional arrangement cannot be sustained and consolidated (hypothesis five). With these points in mind, this chapter will build on the argument that both regimes had lost their hybrid character in the late 2000s, identify their post-hybrid nature and question the evidence for (or the likelihood of) a return to hybridity.

I argue that in Iran while Khamenei's institutional control over the regime has expanded, the legitimacy crisis surrounding his patrimonial authority put the regime's and his guardians' security into greater jeopardy. What may have saved both, and also revived the hybrid system, was the election of Hassan Rouhani in June 2013. In Turkey, the collapse of the hybrid system came about with the defeat of the Kemalist guardians by the liberal-conservative alliance led by the AKP and supported by the West. The triumph of the electoral pillar, however, has not resulted in a transition to consolidated democracy. Instead, as they took control of the institutions once held by the guardians, Turkey's civilian leaders assumed a paternalistic state discourse reminiscent of their Kemalist predecessors and subscribed to a minimalistic notion of democracy.

The fall and the revival of the Iranian hybrid regime

The Leader and 'the perils of presidentialism'

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the expansion of guardians' autonomy and authority at the expense of the republican pillar has taken place gradually and as two intertwined processes, one formal and the other informal. The formal process consists of the constitutional amendments of 1989 canonising and expanding the ambiguously defined role and unwritten powers of the *faqih*, which had hitherto relied on Khomeini's charismatic authority, the 1991 expansion of the Guardian Council's authority to supervise elections and to vet and qualify candidates, as well as the Majles decision in 2008 exempting the *faqih* from any parliamentary oversight. The informal process accompanying this formal accumulation of power includes the expansion of the Leader's personal grip over major political institutions – both Islamic and republican – through his representatives, his control over the *bonyads*, the growing economic prominence of the IRGC, and the guardians' extensive manipulation of the electoral process by methods that go beyond their formal prerogatives.

As Chapter 5 on Iran demonstrated, the weakening of the republican institutions by the guardians, particularly by the Leader's efforts to maximise his influence over both pillars, took place simultaneously on the personal and factional levels, which cut across the two pillars of the Iranian hybrid regime. The suppression and/or marginalisation of three of the IRI's four main factions (the modernist right, the reformists and the neo-conservatives) took a particularly intense turn in the aftermath of the 2009 presidential election. With the defeat of President Ahmadinejad's neo-conservative supporters in the 2012 Majles elections, Khamenei's personal grip over the regime's institutional architecture appeared almost complete – save for the one office that consistently challenged the Leader's political and ideological authority: the presidency.

Consequently, the Leader's suggestion in late 2011 to eliminate the post of the president altogether and have the Majles select a prime minister was reflective of the threat posed by an executive office that was deemed too autonomous from the guardians, in inherent rivalry with the Islamic pillar and,

crucially, able to cater to the enduring popular demand for charismatic leadership that could defy the institutional authority of the Leader.²⁸⁰ The proposal also demonstrated the traditionalists' discomfort with holding presidential elections, especially after the experience of 2009. In July 2012, a Majles group was tasked by the Leader to assess the feasibility of switching from a presidential to a parliamentary system. The group's conclusions were not made public. However, the fact that the traditionalists did not pursue the matter beyond this point suggests that they found the socio-political conditions at the time unfavourable for such a transition.

In theory, a transition into a parliament-centred republican pillar would mitigate the threat posed by a popular charismatic president to the guardians. It would open the way for the emergence of coalition governments that would be easier to manipulate than a cohesive single-faction presidency – as for instance was the case in Turkey during the 1990s. In sum, it would protect the guardians from “the perils of presidentialism” and allow the Leader to maintain a grip over the political system without having so much to engage in open confrontation with elected officials (Linz 1990). The fact that this idea was flaunted but not pursued attests to two important points: first, while the Leader's institutional authority has grown consistently and become extensive, in practice it has not become absolute even after 2009. Secondly, while some guardians (such as Mesbah Yazdi) openly supported the absolute control of *vali-ye faqih* over the entire political system, having taken part in the 1979 revolution, many were also aware of the inherent risks and insecurity of such domination and see some degree of democratic legitimacy as necessary for the regime's survival. As one observer noted at the time, “if such a change materializes, the Islamic Republic's political system will come to more closely resemble the regime it toppled in 1979.” (Alem 2012)

Even without a transition to a parliamentary system, however, numerous critics have compared Khamenei's position to that of the Pahlavi shahs. Kadivar described it as monarchy (*saltanat*) in the mid-2000s. After the 2009 election, Ata'ollah Mohajerani suggested that the Leader had replaced the Islamic

²⁸⁰ “Parliamentary system could be more efficient: Iran's Parliament Speaker” *Payvand*, 22 October 2011, <http://payvand.com/news/11/oct/1237.html>

Republic with an Islamic government, thereby bringing to an end the era of republicanism in Iran (Arjomand 2009: 21). In July 2009, Grand Ayatollah Montazeri issued a series of *fatwas* declaring *velayat-e faqih* illegitimate and unjust in the absence of “proper and free popular elections”.²⁸¹ In a joint statement issued on the anniversary of the IRI’s founding in February 2011, Mousavi and Karroubi described the political system as “monarchism without hereditary rule”.²⁸² Arjomand described the post-2009 arrangement in Iran as clerical monarchism with a neo-patrimonial feature:

The IRI is now critically dependent on decisions made by one man, the Leader, and is for that reason of a comparable degree of fragility to the neo-patrimonial regime of the Shah in the latter part of the 1970s, obvious differences between the two notwithstanding (2009: 191).

As I laid out in Chapter 2, both Iranian revolutions of the twentieth century targeted rulers who were in control of a patrimonial state apparatus, but whose popular base had diminished due to widening social perceptions of unjust and inept rule. Historically, popular support has proven at least as important as institutional power for the security and stability of a regime or ruler in Iran. By the end of Ahmadinejad’s second term, the formal political space had shrunk so much that it accommodated little more than the Leader’s loyal followers within the two pillars, alongside those within the state bureaucracy, *bonyads*, the clerical establishment and the IRGC, who either benefited from his extensive patronage or were not openly engaged in factional rivalries. Perhaps the clearest expression of this new status quo was the disqualification of Rafsanjani, one of the regime’s founding fathers and key players, from the presidential race in 2013. Rafsanjani’s disqualification prompted outspoken conservative Majles deputy Ali Motahari to complain publicly to the Leader that were Khomeini still alive, he would also be disqualified by the Guardian Council.²⁸³ Ayatollah Khomeini’s daughter, Zahra Mostafavi, wrote an open letter to Khamenei,

²⁸¹ “Fatwa-ye Ayatollah Al’azami Montazeri,” *Razesabz*, 31 August 2009, <http://www.rahesabz.net/story/983/>

²⁸² “Iran protests see reinvigorated activists take to the streets in thousands,” *Guardian*, 14 February 2011.

²⁸³ “Name-ye Ali Motahari be Rahbar-e Enqelab derbare redselahiyat-e Hashemi”, Official website of Ali Motahari, 13 May 2013, <http://alimotahari.ir/latest-news/1194>.

protesting the decision.²⁸⁴ It appeared that by significantly personalising power in the IRI, the Leader had tied his fate to that of the regime – and the regime’s fate to his.²⁸⁵

Furthermore, despite his increasingly bitter feud with the president, having supported him in the 2005 and – more importantly – 2009 elections, it was difficult for the Leader to simply disassociate himself from the state of affairs in the country under Ahmadinejad’s administration. Iran faced a dire socio-economic situation during Ahmadinejad’s second term, caused both by governmental mismanagement and the tightening international sanctions regime introduced after 2010. In 2012 oil production fell to a 25-year-low and oil exports dropped by nearly 40% on the previous year; the lowest level since 1986.²⁸⁶ Banking sanctions blocked international money transfers to and from Iran and forced the government and private traders to engage in barter through third parties (Göksel 2012). The impact of the crisis was felt throughout the country, as the purchasing power of the Iranian currency dropped 75% between 2005 and 2013. By October 2012, the rial had lost 80% of its value on the previous year. By the end of the Iranian year in March 2013 inflation had climbed to 40% and the GDP had contracted by 6%. There were widespread reports of food and medicine shortages.²⁸⁷ Finally, Ahmadinejad’s poorly managed redistributionist policies came with a cost as he left the government in USD 67 billion in debt, despite receiving USD 600 billion in oil revenues, the highest in the IRI history, during his eight-year tenure.²⁸⁸

Complementing Iran’s economic hardships was the increasingly volatile geopolitical atmosphere in Middle East following the outbreak of the ‘Arab Spring’ uprisings. The regime’s early attempts to present the uprisings across the

²⁸⁴ “Name-ye mohem-e doktor Zehra Mostafavi ferzand-e hazrat-e Imam Khomeini (s) be maqam-e moazzam-e rahbar”, *Jamaran*, 22 May 2013, http://www.jamaran.ir/fa/NewsContent-id_26621.aspx.

²⁸⁵ In the words of Nooshabeh Amiri, “when Khamenei falls, so will the regime”. “Ba Khamenei nezam ‘esqat’ mishavad”, *Roos Online*, 7 February 2011, <http://www.roozonline.com/english/news3/newsitem/archive/2011/february/07/article/-e892d9d020.html>

²⁸⁶ “Sanctions Cut Iran’s Oil Exports to 26-Year Low”, *Wall Street Journal*, 29 April 2013; “Iran oil output heads to 25-year low”, *Financial Times*, 4 June 2013.

²⁸⁷ “Iran unable to get life-saving drugs due to international sanctions”, *Guardian*, 3 January 2013.

²⁸⁸ “Eraeh-ye gozarash-e a’malkard-e 100 rooz-e aval-e dowlat-e yazdahom be mardom”, Official website of President Hassan Rouhani, 26 November 2013, http://www.rouhani.ir/event.php?event_id=198

Middle East as an 'Islamic Awakening', inspired by Iran's own 1979 revolution were gradually abandoned as it became clear that Sunni Islamist movements that replaced Tunisia and Egypt's pro-West secular dictators preferred to emulate the geopolitical pragmatism of Turkey's AKP rather than the anti-imperialism of the IRI. Tensions between Iran and the Gulf Arab monarchies, particularly Saudi Arabia, which were already high before 2011, turned into open rivalry as the Saudi military crushed the Shia uprising in Sunni-ruled Bahrain.²⁸⁹ More alarmingly, sponsored by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and backed by the West, a wide array of mainly Sunni movements defied Iran's main strategic ally in the region, the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria (Zibakalam 2011). The uprising that started in Syria in March 2011 gradually evolved into a violent civil war fought along the Sunni-Shia fault line and became the centre stage of a geopolitical power struggle drawing in regional and global players. It was in this volatile geopolitical environment and amidst heightened Israeli threats of a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities that the new sanctions regime came into effect.

In short, as the 2013 presidential election approached, the Leader found himself in an institutionally powerful but strategically weakened position, facing a severe economic crisis and a popular legitimacy deficit at home and an increasingly hostile and unstable geopolitical environment abroad. The fact that in the third presidential debate held on 5 June, all of the candidates who were approved by the GC condemned Ahmadinejad's economic and foreign policies, criticised the state of affairs in the IRI and in varying degrees supported a move away from international confrontation came as evidence of a system-wide recognition of the crisis that had engulfed the regime. This crisis and the Leader's predicament are crucial to explaining Hassan Rouhani's unexpected victory on 15 June 2013.

²⁸⁹ ""Cut off head of snake" Saudis told U.S. on Iran", *Reuters*, 29 November 2010.

The election of Hassan Rouhani and return to hybridity

A mere four days before the presidential election, a first-round victory by Hassan Rouhani would come as a surprise to most Iranians, outside observers as well as many regime insiders, including the Leader himself. Yet Rouhani managed to secure just over 50% of the vote and win the race in the first round, avoiding a run off. The official participation rate of 73% did not suggest considerable voter apathy, such as in 2005. Unlike in 2009, there were no protests or widespread claims of vote rigging (on the contrary, the dominant scene was that of street celebrations by Rouhani supporters in major cities across the country). The outcome was quickly endorsed by the GC and the Leader, as well as sidelined opposition figures, such as Rafsanjani and Khatami.

At the risk of passing judgement on developments that might be too recent for the thesis to engage in academically, I will argue that the 2013 election marks a return to hybridity in the IRI, due to the widespread acceptance of its largely unpredicted outcome and its subsequent role in drawing the modernists and some reformists back into the regime's formal political space. In turn, this argument strengthens the observation made in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5 that the political space in the IRI consists not only of the regime's formal institutional structures but also of informal, personality-based factional networks. Political contestation continued mainly at this informal level even as formal competition was highly restricted from 2009 onwards. In other words, the power struggle in the period between mid-2009 and mid-2013 occurred as intra-elite competition in an insecure authoritarian setting where the electoral institutions were stifled but not formally disassembled, therefore facilitating a return to institutional hybridity under changing socio-economic and geopolitical conditions.

An academic, diplomat and cleric, Hassan Rouhani was little known by the electorate, given his bureaucratic and technocratic career within the Islamic Republic. He was very much an establishment insider, having held numerous strategic posts since the regime's inception. He was a commander in the war with Iraq, serving as the head of *Khatam al-Anbiya*, the engineering arm of the IRGC, as well as the air force. A five-time Majles deputy, a member of the

Expediency Council from 1991 and the Assembly of Experts from 1998, he was also the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council from 1989 until 2005, national security advisor to presidents Rafsanjani and Khatami, as well as Khatami's chief nuclear negotiator between 2003 and 2005. Often described as a centrist, Rouhani has not been formally associated with any of the IRI's main political factions. However, partly due to his close personal relationship with Rafsanjani, he has been viewed with distrust among some reformists and traditionalists and mostly disliked by the neo-conservatives. Even so, the fact that he never played an overtly political role meant that he had not become the target of sustained political attention – either positive or negative – until a week before the election. Ehteshami describes him as an “establishment rebel who has a mind of his own in socio-political and foreign policies, and does not blindly tow regime lines.”²⁹⁰ His public criticism in 2006 of Mesbah Yazdi's argument that legitimate authority can only be divinely obtained can be seen as a philosophical defence of the hybrid regime:²⁹¹

Everyday some people juxtapose national sovereignty (*hakimiyet-e melli*) against religious sovereignty (*hakimiyat-e dini*). National sovereignty is inseparable from religious sovereignty. [...] Can we say that the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is not democratic? Ours is a 'religious democracy' (*mardomsalari dini*). Can we say that the people's votes are purely ceremonial? It was the will of the Imam [Khomeini] that votes should matter.

Rouhani was not the Leader's preferred candidate; that person was Saeed Jalili, whose campaign stirred little public enthusiasm. However, like the seven other candidates who were ultimately approved by the GC, he was not perceived as a potential threat to the Leader or the regime either. This was an election designed to be safe for the Leader.²⁹² Rouhani was also not a front-runner until three days before the election, when both Rafsanjani and Khatami publicly endorsed him. With the withdrawal of Mohammad Reza Aref, the only reformist candidate on the list, Rouhani suddenly turned into the preferred candidate of

²⁹⁰ Lecture at the London School of Economics, 27 November 2013.

²⁹¹ *Entekhab*, 14 March 2006.

²⁹² The other candidates besides Rouhani and Jalili were Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, Ali Akbar Velayati, Mohsen Rezaei, Mohammad Gharazi and Mohammad Reza Aref.

the modernist right, the reformists and other critics of the Leader and the status quo, against five conservative establishment figures. Khatami toured the country on behalf of Rouhani in an attempt to energise the reformist base, where there was an ongoing debate about boycotting the election. For example, Mostafa Tajzadeh, a prominent reformist politician jailed after 2009, called for a boycott following Rafsanjani's disqualification, by which, he claimed, the regime had displayed its incompetence and admitted Rafsanjani's popularity among the people.²⁹³ Tajzadeh withdrew his call once Rafsanjani expressed his open support for Rouhani.

Rafsanjani's predicament after 2009 was the mirror opposite of Khamenei's: at the same time as he was being marginalised institutionally, Rafsanjani's popularity surged based on the perception that he was sacrificing his position to defend a just cause. Increasingly before the election, he became portrayed as the only person capable of standing up to the Leader and managing economic and political normalisation, as he did after the Iraq war.²⁹⁴ While his disqualification was clearly meant to prevent his return to power, in effect it added to his popularity, casting him as the victim of a personal vendetta, while painting the regime (and the Leader) weak and insecure. Arguably, Khamenei could have stemmed this trend by reversing the GC's decision and allowing Rafsanjani to run, therefore appearing magnanimous and in touch with public opinion, but the Leader was evidentially more willing to contend with public disapproval than facing the prospect of another Rafsanjani presidency. In the end, more than anyone else, it was Rafsanjani's support that revived Rouhani's campaign in the final hour. As a result, his victory was very much a victory for Rafsanjani as well (Karami 2013).

We should underline the importance of Rafsanjani and Khatami's public endorsement in turning around the fortunes of the Rouhani campaign and

²⁹³ "Tajzadeh: Agher Rahbari khodsarihaye Jannati ra mehar nakonad mesool-e mostaqim-e entekhabat rasool khahad bood" *Norooz News*, 7 May 2013, <http://norooznews.org/news/2013/05/7/3065>.

²⁹⁴ Not all those who contributed to this portrayal were modernists or reformists. In March, Foad Sadeghi, founder of the news website *Baztab* (known for being close to Mohsen Rezaei and highly critical of the Ahmadinejad government) wrote an article likening Iran's socio-economic and geopolitical situation to the end of the Iraq war and calling on Rafsanjani (and Khatami) to assist the Leader in "saving the country" by participating in the upcoming election. *Baztab Emrooz*, 25 March 2013.

changing the election's dynamic almost overnight. The fact that the two sidelined former presidents were able to generate considerable public excitement in a matter of days and prevail over the traditionalist guardians' will to impose their chosen candidate on the system attested to the two men's continued significance as providers of popular legitimacy to the IRI system. At the same time, however, it also showed their continued loyalty to and dependence on this system. It would be misleading to assume, in other words, that Rafsanjani and Khatami only put their weight behind Rouhani to defy the Leader; as regime insiders their fate was also tied to that of the system. In short, this episode demonstrated Khamenei and the traditionalists could only marginalise the two leaders at the expense of crucial popular legitimacy for the regime, in which Rafsanjani and Khatami also remain deeply invested. Last but not the least, the unexpected level of support Rouhani received from small towns and the urban working class suggested that the traditionalists' were losing their grip over their core support base, presumably as a result of the growing economic instability in the country.

These observations help explain why the Leader and the traditionalist guardians may have favoured a return to hybridity instead of manipulating the outcome of the poll. Given the precarious state of its domestic legitimacy and geopolitical position, it would be safe to suggest that the regime was not willing to risk another wave of mass demonstrations four years after the 2009 protests. We should also note, however, that a Rouhani presidency did not necessarily mean a defeat for the Leader, even if it was a victory for Rafsanjani. Rouhani was not a reformist and, unlike Khatami and the ideologues of the reform movement, he did not make promises that would challenge the Leader's institutional authority.²⁹⁵ The return of the presidency to a cleric would bring an end to the anti-clerical tide that peaked during the Ahmadinejad era. Furthermore, as a centrist and establishment insider, Rouhani would be aware of the delicate power dynamics amongst the IRI elite and could be expected to thread a careful balance.

²⁹⁵ Attempting to mitigate the distrust among the reformists towards Rouhani, Khatami consistently strove to reconcile reform with Rouhani's discourse of moderation. Following the election he said, "We preferred for the reformist discourse to win even if reformists themselves were not the victors ... Real reformism is compatible with rational moderation. The slogan of moderation is not outside the sphere of reformism." "Iran's Khatami strikes back", *Guardian*, 19 September 2013.

Finally, Rouhani's emphasis on 'moderation' (*etedal*) and experience as chief nuclear negotiator could relieve the regime of some of the economic and geopolitical pressures, while a return to institutional hybridity could help it regain some of the popular legitimacy lost in previous years. His platform of 'prudence and hope' (*tadbir va omid*) symbolised a rejection of Ahmadinejad's confrontational socio-economic and foreign policies.²⁹⁶ Overall, a degree of socio-political, economic and international normalisation appeared necessary for the IRI – and the Leader – to overcome the various interconnected crises surrounding it. And if a Rouhani presidency meant the return of the modernists and reformists to the formal political space, the Leader could still resort to his extensive patronage over the regime's key institutions to contend with rising factional challenges in due course, as he did successfully during the previous three presidencies.

The first months of the Rouhani presidency demonstrated that the regime elite was indeed deeply engaged in such strategic calculations and adjustments to the changing status quo. The new president put together a cabinet of 'moderates' that featured traditionalists, modernists and reformists, many of whom were known for their experience in government and technical expertise rather than overt factional affiliations. While the traditionalist dominated Majles rejected three of Rouhani's ministerial nominations for being too close to the Green Movement, it did approve Khatami-era officials Bijan Namdar Zanganeh as oil minister, Massoumeh Ebtekar as vice president and Mohammad Javad Zarif as foreign minister. The key ministries of intelligence, interior and justice were given to traditionalists. In particular, the appointment as justice minister of Mostafa Pourmohammadi, whom Ahmadinejad had sacked in 2009, demonstrated that the new president was not interested in confronting the Leader over presidential appointees as his successor had done.²⁹⁷

One of Rouhani's earliest initiatives was to re-engage with the P5+1 group of countries to work towards a negotiated settlement of the nuclear issue. This

²⁹⁶ Consequently, his administration has been dubbed "the government of moderation and hope".

²⁹⁷ The appointment was also condemned by human rights organisations. Having served as a prosecutor in revolutionary courts and as deputy intelligence minister, Pourmohammadi has been implicated in the execution of thousands of political dissidents in the late 1980s. (HRW 2013).

happened with the explicit blessing of the Leader, who declared in June that solving the nuclear issue would be “simple and easy” if western countries put aside “their stubbornness”,²⁹⁸ and in September, described the government as a champion wrestler that needed to show “heroic flexibility” without forgetting “who the opponent is”.²⁹⁹ Testifying both the pragmatism of Khamenei’s decision as well as the regime’s difficult geopolitical predicament, Mohammad Ali Jafari, the head of the IRGC, likened this statement to Khomeini’s expression of “drinking from the poisoned chalice” as he agreed to the ceasefire that ended the war with Iraq in 1988.³⁰⁰

On 28 September 2013, shortly after they addressed the UN General Assembly in New York, the US and Iranian presidents held a phone conversation, the highest-level contact between the two countries since the Iranian revolution. On 24 November, Iran and the P5+1 countries reached a deal over the nuclear issue, whereby Iran agreed to stop uranium enrichment above 5% and be subject to stricter international inspections in exchange for limited sanctions relief. The deal, which the US and Iranian governments described as a historic breakthrough, marked a notable change in the nature of bilateral relations and a turn away from the Ahmadinejad and Bush era policy of ideological confrontation. The mainstream public reaction to the deal in Iran appeared to be one of widespread approval and cautious optimism regarding the country’s economic future, reflected in the sudden rise in the Tehran Stock Exchange.³⁰¹

Coming against vocal opposition from Israel, Saudi Arabia as well as neo-conservative Republicans in the US Congress and Senate, the nuclear deal can also be seen as a manifestation of the fast changing status quo in Syria. As the regime of Bashar al-Assad managed to hold on to power and al-Qaeda affiliated Sunni jihadist groups became increasingly dominant within Syria’s fractured opposition, the West started reassessing its strategy of supporting the opposition and calling for regime change. In September the Obama administration defied pressure from Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel, and abandoned its threat to

²⁹⁸ *Etemaad*, 27 June 2013.

²⁹⁹ “Enigmatic Leader of Iran Backs Overture, for Now”, *New York Times*, 23 September 2013.

³⁰⁰ “Dowlāt-e dovom Khordad hadaql hemkari ra ba Sepah dasht” *Mehr News*, 27 September 2013, <http://www.mehrnews.com/detail/News/2143937>.

³⁰¹ “Iranians Pile Into Stocks as Nuclear Deal Spurs 133% Gain”, *Bloomberg*, 26 December 2013.

intervene in Syria militarily after the regime in Damascus was accused of using chemical weapons, and instead struck a 'last-minute' agreement with Russia and the Syrian regime for the supervised destruction of its chemical arsenal. In October, EU foreign ministers called to end military support for the Syrian opposition. A delegation representing the Assad government was invited to the second international conference on Syria in Geneva in January 2014.

The nuclear deal, in other words, signalled a tentative improvement in Iran's geopolitical and economic fortunes. As such, it can be said to have bolstered the popularity and legitimacy of the government of Hassan Rouhani, reflected in the confident manner by which the president provided an account of his first 100 days in office to the Iranian people. We can argue that Rouhani's success has benefited the popular image of his principal supporters, Rafsanjani and Khatami as well. Although tentative and fragile, the easing of economic and geopolitical tensions also enhances the regime's credibility and legitimacy, as the Rouhani government represents the 'moderate' and centrist face of the clerical-led Islamic republican system. We can argue that this secures the position of the Leader for the foreseeable future.

What happens to Iran after Khamenei's eventual demise remains an open question. This is also *the* question concerning the fate of the hybrid regime. That being said, as I concluded this thesis, it appeared that the IRI hybrid regime was once again firmly in place, together with its main institutions, leading actors as well as its embedded personal, factional and institutional rivalries.³⁰² Finding its balance after swinging out of hybridity, it had demonstrated its resilience.

³⁰² Factional rivalries gradually came to the fore and ideological battle lines re-emerged in the months following Rouhani's election:

- In August, a website linked to the IRGC published a four-point ideological plan for the organisation and its student body to pursue during the next four years. These included protecting the ideological boundaries of the revolution and consolidating people's relationship with the Islamic system; resisting 'deviation'; fighting materialism; and serving the system rather than any faction or administration.

"Chahar naqsh-e Sepah va jonbash-e daneshjooyi dar 4 sal-e ayendeh" *Ya Lesarat al-Hosseini*, 20 August 2013, <http://www.yalasarat.com/vdcjhaem.uqeavzsfu.html>.

- In October, reformist *Bahar* newspaper was banned by the regime's press monitoring agency for publishing an article considered an insult to Islam.

- In October, the traditionalist Majles threatened Oil Minister Bijan Zangeneh and Economics Minister Ali Teyebnia with impeachment. Foreign Minister Zarif was summoned to the Majles in December to account for his comments that the United States can "wipe out Iran's defense systems with just one bomb" with several traditionalist MPs calling for his resignation.

Change and continuity in post-Kemalist Turkey

The unravelling of the liberal-conservative alliance

Unlike in Iran, the power struggle between the two pillars of the Turkish hybrid regime resulted in a victory for the representatives of the electoral pillar. Yet as the following pages will demonstrate, the victory of the elected civilians did not result in the consolidation of substantial democracy in Turkey. On the contrary, the system of Kemalist guardianship gave way to an intense religious populism driven by the charismatic leadership of Prime Minister Erdoğan in a highly insecure political and geostrategic atmosphere and a minimally democratic setting.

In June 2013, while there were scenes of celebration on the streets of Tehran following President Rouhani's election, the largest anti-government demonstrations in decades were taking place on the streets of Istanbul, Ankara and dozens of other cities around Turkey. The protests, which had sparked over the government's decision to convert Gezi Park, a public green space in Istanbul's Taksim Square, into a shopping mall, had brought together a large mix of disparate and previously antagonistic groups, united in their opposition to the AKP government. These included liberals, social democrats, communists, secular nationalists, Alevis, Kurds, LGBT activists, environmentalists and 'anti-capitalist Muslims', alongside a notable number politically unaffiliated students and young middle-class professionals (KONDA 2013). Despite the notable presence of *Ulusalçı* groups among the protestors, the Gezi protests stood out from the republican rallies of 2007 with their diverse, spontaneous and overwhelmingly civilian character. Pacified through the court cases, the military was not able to manipulate, capitalise or hijack the protests as in the past, allowing them to

- In late December, Mesbah Yazdi declared 'moderation' to be a threat to Islam similar to reformism and said they would intervene "if we feel that ... the beliefs and values of Islam, are exposed to danger". Interview, *9 Day*, 21 December 2013.

- Ahmad Jannati, head of the Guardian Council, said that even if the guardians of the regime were in a minority in society, they had a duty to protect the Islamic order. "Debir-e Shoraye Negahban: Hatti agher dar egheliyat bashim boyad nezam ra hafz konim", *BBC Persian*, 24 December 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2013/12/131224_139_jannati_minority_regime.shtml

maintain and cultivate a distinctly civilian character and relatively pluralistic message, without wittingly or unwittingly legitimising a military intervention.

The protests were an outburst of accumulated reaction to three interrelated dynamics: the AKP's construction-driven economic growth strategy, the rise of a new patriarchal state discourse explicitly based on a conservative interpretation of Sunni social morality, and the gradual suppression of civil liberties in conjunction with the personalisation of power in the hands of a popular and charismatic leader. For Prime Minister Erdoğan and his supporters, who looked at politics increasingly through the prism of conspiracies, in part due to their past experience of facing non-democratic interventions, the protests were part of a western-backed plot to prevent Turkey's rise as a powerful Muslim nation under the AKP, similar to the republican rallies of 2007 (Öktem and Akkoyunlu 2013). Hence, instead of addressing the protestors' grievances, the government resorted to crushing them by force, resulting in thousands of injuries, several deaths and further socio-political polarisation (Amnesty International 2013).

The Gezi protests took many observers who saw Turkey as a 'success story' by surprise. Neither the scale of the demonstrations nor the government's heavy handed reaction and recourse to what appeared to be fantastic conspiracy theories appeared to fit the narrative of a country that had taken steps towards resolving its internal divisions, consolidated its democracy and achieved economic stability under the leadership of its popularly elected 'moderate Islamist' government.³⁰³ As I noted earlier in this chapter, this narrative had become popular in the Middle East, especially amongst the ascendant Sunni movements in post-revolutionary Arab countries that looked to the AKP as an effective governance model (Sallam 2013).³⁰⁴ Finally, as I noted previously,

³⁰³ Notoriously, Yiğit Bulut, a journalist whom Erdoğan appointed as advisor during the protests, claimed that foreign powers were trying to kill the prime minister through 'telekinesis'.

³⁰⁴ Two surveys found that Turkey's popularity was on the rise before and in the immediate aftermath of the Arab uprisings in the Middle East. See Aragall, Padilla and Pont (2012) and Akgün and Senyücel-Gündoğar (2012).

western foreign policy strategists periodically promoted the idea of a 'Turkish model' for the Middle East, mainly on the basis of geopolitical expediency.³⁰⁵

The root causes of these protests, and the government's respond to them – which collectively signalled the beginning of an acute socio-political crisis in post-Kemalist Turkey – should be analysed in the context of changing power dynamics and geopolitical alliances in and around the country from mid-to-late 2000s onwards. Already by the mid-2000s, the factors that had brought about the liberal-conservative alliance and propelled the AKP to implement political reforms in line with the EU accession process had started to disappear. Two external developments were influential in reintroducing a governmental discourse of securitisation and confrontation, challenging the discourse of democratisation and reconciliation that had characterised the early 2000s: the resumption of hostilities between the Turkish military and the PKK following the latter's termination of a five-year ceasefire in June 2004, and the gradual loss of momentum in Turkey's EU accession process.

The resumption of the conflict was partly triggered by the US occupation of Iraq, which provided renewed momentum for Kurdish independence and increased manoeuvring capability for the PKK along the Turkish-Iraqi border. The downturn in the Turkish – EU relations, on the other hand, was a consequence of the popular backlash inside Europe against the process of enlargement and 'Brusselsisation' of the EU. Together with the rise of Islamophobia in the post-September 11 setting in a number of European countries with significant Muslim immigrant communities, public attitudes towards Turkey's accession assumed an increasingly hostile and xenophobic character. The French and Dutch rejections of the Lisbon Treaty in 2004 and the election of 'Turcosceptic' politicians, Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy, in Germany and France were institutional reflections of this backlash. These twin processes fuelled, and were in return fuelled by, a sense of frustrated nationalism within Turkey, ultimately contributing both to the confrontational style of politics at home and the cooling of relations between Turkey and the EU.

³⁰⁵ This recurrent presentation of Turkey by the US and UK foreign policy strategists as a model for its wider region is discussed in "The United States and the logic of strategy", Akkoyunlu, Nicolaidis and Öktem (2013: 44 – 51).

Furthermore, the defeat of the military-bureaucratic guardians removed the common foe that had united the liberals and the conservatives, exposing their clashing visions over issues such as defining the nature and the limits of state authority, the boundaries of free speech or the role of women in society. With the waning of the EU as an external pressure mechanism for domestic reform and the provider of a democratisation framework, the liberals found it increasingly difficult to influence the contents and the direction of change. Less bound by the external anchor of the EU and the internal pressure of the guardian state, and more confident in their control of the institutions once dominated by the Kemalist guardians, the AKP officials' rhetoric and policies started to resemble, following their second general election victory in 2007, but especially after the third one in 2011, a socially conservative version of their patriarchal predecessors.

Evidence of this return to illiberal patriarchy included growing intolerance of public criticism of the government,³⁰⁶ a controversial internet law designed to control cyberspace by blocking websites that the state deemed to be socially, morally or politically corrosive, and a 2006 revision to the Anti-Terrorism Legislation that significantly broadened the definition of terrorism.³⁰⁷ It was based on this legislation that thousands of journalists, editors, academics, small publishers, student activists and local politicians – mostly of leftist political orientation and/or Kurdish background, or with alleged links to the 'Ergenekon' network – were arrested on contentious charges of terrorism. Between early 2009, shortly after the Constitutional Court's decision to outlaw the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*, DTP), and late 2011, over 2,000 people, including some 250 elected politicians and mayors, alongside well-known academics, publishers and human rights activists, were arrested in a case against the suspected civilian wing of the PKK.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ This led to a rising number of court cases launched against dissident journalists and a culture of self-censorship in the editorial boards of media conglomerates and independent news outlets (EC 2011: 6, 25 – 26). "Survey reveals that Turkish journalists recognize media censorship", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 8 October 2011.

³⁰⁷ Law No. 5532, adopted on 29 June 2006.

³⁰⁸ "KCK Arrests Deepen Freedom of Expression Concerns", *Bianet English*, 16 November 2011, <http://www.bianet.org/english/freedom-of-expression/134065-kck-arrests-deepen-freedom-of-expression-concerns>.

The Anti-Terrorism Legislation rolled back the EU-backed police reforms of 2004 by expanding the authority of the police force, providing officers with enhanced legal impunity and, for the first time, arming special police units with military-grade weapons. A direct consequence of this revision was the increasingly commonplace use of excessive force against peaceful demonstrators and the ill treatment of detainees (in some cases resulting in deaths); a process that reached a climax during the 2013 protests (HRW 2008). The authoritarian spirit of this legislation, which harks back at the 'dirty war' of the 1990s, was captured by the AKP's interior minister, İdris Naim Şahin, in a 2011 speech in which he suggested that terrorism was not an act limited to armed militants, but that "poets, painters, singers, satirists and academics can also be terrorists".³⁰⁹ This was the first year that Turkey topped the list of countries with most journalists in jail, surpassing both China and Iran; a title that it maintained in 2012 and 2013.³¹⁰

Dominated by religious nationalist political views since the 1980s, the police force came to resemble the armed extension of the ruling party, used primarily in imposing its will on state and society. The government regarded the police, which is organised under the Interior Ministry, as a domestic counter balance against the military. In 2009, Erdoğan called the police "the guarantors of the regime", a description with conspicuous resemblance to the military's guardianship role.³¹¹ As noted earlier, the intelligence arm of the police played a key role in unearthing documents that were at the centre of the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials. As such, parallel to the 'demilitarisation' of the state was the process of 'militarisation' of the police force, with the latter's budget rising consistently during a decade of AKP government (Gönen, Berksoy, Başer and Uçum 2014). The only other institution besides the police whose expenditures increased at similarly steep rates was the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*), which played a prominent role in promoting the ruling party's

³⁰⁹ "İçişleri Bakanı'ndan yeni terör tarifleri", *Radikal*, 26 December 2011.

³¹⁰ CPJ condemns journalist arrests in Turkey', *Committee to Protect Journalists Worldwide*, 22 December 2011; "Turkey--world's top press jailer once more", *Committee to Protect Journalists Worldwide*, 18 December 2013.

³¹¹ "Rejimin güvencesi polis' sözleri tartışma çıkardı", *Hürriyet*, 29 June 2009.

religiously defined worldview both at home, and increasingly, on a global scale (Atalay 2013).

Such developments notwithstanding, there were still numerous avenues of cooperation for the liberals and the conservatives between 2007 and 2011. The unfinished struggle against military-bureaucratic guardianship was one of them and both groups put their support behind Gül's presidential nomination in 2007 as well as the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials. Prominent members of the liberal intelligentsia also came out in support of the proposed reforms in the constitutional referendum of September 2010, seeing it as a necessary step towards a new civilian made democratic constitution, which the ruling party promised in 2007 but has not delivered since (Aktar 2010; Bâli 2010).

Another area of cooperation was the implementation of Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's 'zero problems with neighbours' policy, which the Turkish foreign ministry pursued energetically and with a degree of success during this period (Kadioğlu, Öktem and Karlı 2012). In the framework of this policy, the AKP government sought to act as a mediator in regional conflicts such as between Israel and Syria, Iran and the West or between rival Palestinian factions. Prioritising trade, energy and security cooperation in bilateral relations, Ankara strengthened its previously troubled ties with its neighbours, including Greece, Russia, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Increased border stability, in turn, encouraged the government to launch a number of bold reform initiatives in 2009. Known as the Kurdish, Alevi and Armenian 'openings', these were aimed at, respectively, establishing direct talks with the PKK leadership to negotiate a permanent settlement, addressing the historic grievances of the country's largest religious minority, and opening borders and re-establishing diplomatic ties with the Republic of Armenia (ICG 2009; Ulusoy 2010).³¹² Despite some encouraging early progress all three initiatives had collapsed by 2011, largely due to mismanaged popular expectations, communication failures, personality clashes as well as, ultimately, a fear of entrenched nationalist (or in the case of the Alevi initiative, sectarian) backlash by the involved parties during an election year.

The fact that the AKP could still launch such reform initiatives while also display visibly authoritarian tendencies demonstrates the existence of competing

³¹² "Turkey and the Kurds: Peace Time?", *Economist*, 27 August 2009.

socio-political visions and strategies inside the governing party before 2011, giving it a somewhat schizophrenic, nonetheless relatively pluralistic character. The failure of these initiatives brought this pluralism to an end. At the same time, the defeat of the Kemalist guardians, the ruling party's third election victory in June 2011 on the back of strong economic growth at a time of deepening economic crisis in the West, and the rise of the 'Turkish model' in the early phase of the Arab uprisings convinced Prime Minister Erdoğan that he had the power, the popular support, as well as the historic opportunity to singlehandedly realise his ambitious vision of remaking Turkey and the Middle East.

Enduring patriarchy and the rise of the 'Erdoğan cult'

The post-2011 election period in Turkey was one in which the governing party's domestic and foreign politics became truly enmeshed, with Turkey's active engagement in the power struggles beyond its borders exacerbating social and ethnic tensions at home, and domestic tensions fuelling a more confrontational foreign policy abroad. This period also saw a rapid personalisation of power by Prime Minister Erdoğan, who announced his plan to replace Turkey's parliamentary system with a presidential one and become Turkey's first directly elected president in 2014. Declaring the institutional separation of powers as the "main obstacle" to political expediency, Erdoğan and his advisors appealed for a 'super presidency' equipped with the power to dissolve the parliament, govern through executive decrees and appoint senior judges and bureaucrats without parliamentary approval.³¹³

As part of this endeavour, Erdoğan personally vetted his party's list of candidates for the 2011 election, leaving out liberal-leaning and independent-minded figures as well as those with close ties to President Gül, who was increasingly seen as a potential rival in a future presidential race. Surrounded by loyalists who owed their political status to him, a personality cult started to form around the prime minister that gradually alienated him from his increasingly disillusioned former allies as well as some of his long-time comrades. Party

³¹³ "Separation of powers an obstacle, says Erdoğan", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 18 December 2012.

members across the country started referring to him formally as ‘The Great Master’ (*Büyük Usta*) – a reference that Erdoğan and the AKP adopted during the 2011 campaign. Much more controversially for the less fervent Muslims, in what is a clear act of blasphemy for Islam, some of his sycophantic associates in the party started attributing divine qualities to their ‘prophet-like’ leader.³¹⁴

At the same time, in another example of the polarised and caricaturised social interpretations of history, both Erdoğan’s adoring supporters and passionate opponents likened him to a modern-day Ottoman sultan – the former to depict him as a warrior-like champion of Islam and Turkish nationalism in the spirit of Mehmed the Conqueror, and the latter to brand him a fanatical, backward despot; the antithesis of Atatürk.³¹⁵ Indeed, with the addition of Abdullah Öcalan, the incarcerated charismatic leader of the Kurdish nationalist movement, who started playing a visible public role in the intermittent negotiations between the state and the Kurds since 2009, politics in the post-2011 election Turkey increasingly came under the shadow of three charismatic figures – two alive and one ‘immortal’. This was not an environment conducive for the consolidation of substantive democracy.

The interwoven nature of foreign and domestic politics, and the emerging pyramid-like architecture of power placing Erdoğan at the centre of the party, the party at the centre of Turkey and Turkey at the centre of a vast Islamic realm corresponding to the former territories of the Ottoman Empire, were vividly portrayed in the speech the prime minister delivered on the night of his election

³¹⁴ Some memorable public statements by the prime minister’s followers include:

- “To us, our prime minister is a second prophet”, İsmail Hakkı Eser, AKP chair for Aydın province, 3 February 2010.
- “Even touching our prime minister is an act of worship”, AKP MP Hüseyin Şahin, 21 July 2011.
- “I swear to God that Erdoğan is the indefinite and eternal leader of Turkey”, AKP Deputy Chairman Süleyman Soylu, 3 February 2013.
- “Rize, Istanbul and Siirt are sacred places” EU Affairs Minister and Chief Negotiator Egemen Bağış, 10 February 2013, in reference to the paternal hometowns and birthplaces of the PM and his wife.
- “I recognise Erdoğan as a righteous caliph and pay him homage”, Twitter message by journalist Atılğan Bayar, 23 August 2013.
- “[Erdoğan] is a world leader that possesses all the attributes of Allah”, AKP MP Fevai Arslan, 16 January 2014.

³¹⁵ A large banner reading “Last Ottoman sultan, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan the First” was unfurled during a public ceremony attended by the prime minister in Istanbul in March 2009.

victory in June 2011.³¹⁶ “Believe me,” Erdoğan said, addressing thousands of supporters from the balcony of the AKP headquarters in Ankara:

Sarajevo won today as much as Istanbul, Beirut won as much as Izmir, Damascus won as much as Ankara, Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, Jerusalem won as much as Diyarbakir.

Erdoğan envisioned a post-Kemalist Turkey that would lead the new Middle East, where popular Islamist movements like Tunisia’s an-Nahda and Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood were replacing secular military dictatorships one after another. The expectation that Syria would soon follow the North African examples of regime change led the AKP government to decisively burn the bridges it had built with the government of Bashar al-Assad in previous years and become one of the foremost supporters of the opposition movement in this country. This commitment, in turn, brought Davutoğlu’s ‘zero problems with neighbours’ policy to an end, as it cast Turkey on the side of an emerging western-backed Sunni alliance against the Syrian government and its principal supporters: Russia and the ‘Shia axis’ consisting of Iran, Iraq’s al-Maliki government and Lebanon’s Hizbullah.

Embodied in the slogan “Great Nation, Great Power, Target 2023” adopted at the party’s general congress in September 2012, the AKP’s domestic agenda for the coming decade, during which it aimed to build the new Turkey, included an ambitious economic growth plan and an openly articulated social engineering project. In its attempt to display the new Turkey’s defining characteristics and transform it into one of the world’s largest economies by the hundredth anniversary of the republic’s founding, the government unveiled a series of spectacular construction projects.³¹⁷ These included building the world’s largest mosque on Istanbul’s highest hilltop, digging an artificial canal parallel to the Bosphorus Strait and spanning a third bridge over it to connect with a new 150-million-passenger capacity airport.³¹⁸ To address the country’s chronic energy

³¹⁶ “Mandate for a new Turkish era”, *New York Times*, 15 June 2011.

³¹⁷ See ‘Hedef 2023’ in the official website of the AKP, <http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/hedefler>

³¹⁸ “PM Erdoğan unveils long-awaited ‘crazy project’ as Kanal İstanbul”, *Today’s Zaman*, 27 April 2011; “PM announces construction of giant mosque in Istanbul”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 31 May 2012.

dependence, the government pressed with the construction of new hydroelectric dams and announced plans to build two nuclear power plants. Finally, reflecting the AKP's construction-based neo-liberal growth strategy, a vast number of urban regeneration and gentrification projects, carried out by private contractors close to the government and advertised intensely in the Middle East to attract Gulf Arab capital, started changing the landscape of Turkey's cities dramatically.³¹⁹

The top-down imposition of these plans by the government and their overlooked environmental and socio-economic implications generated a corresponding public reaction. Opponents of the government's plans pointed out that the artificial canal, the third bridge and the new airport threatened to destroy Istanbul's last remaining forest area by opening it to urban development.³²⁰ They protested hydroelectric dams that submerged entire towns, historical sites and sensitive ecosystems, and the nuclear plants, which were planned to be built on an earthquake prone geography.³²¹ Finally, urban regeneration projects frequently triggered smaller scale protests, as they displaced lower income communities en masse to the city's uninhabited outskirts, while also privatising public spaces, such as the Gezi Park in Taksim Square, at an alarming rate (Karaman 2013).

At the same time, following the prime minister's explicitly stated desire to "raise a religious youth", the AKP forced a new education bill through the GNA that increased the number of *İmam Hatip* schools and added new religion courses to public school curricula.³²² This was accompanied by limitations on what the government viewed as immoral behaviour, such as tightening curbs on alcohol sales and consumption, a new legislation restricting abortions or the prime minister's suggestion to ban mixed-sex private student housing. RTÜK, the state's media regulatory agency founded by the 1980 junta, carried out an intensive campaign of censorship to eradicate immorality on TV. Finally, thanks to the rising number of religiously conservative public prosecutors, courts that

³¹⁹ "Turkey in push to attract Arab investors", *Financial Times*, 30 September 2012

³²⁰ "İstanbul's new bridge, highway, canal threaten city's northern forests", *Today's Zaman*, 11 August 2013.

³²¹ "Turkish dam threatens town that dates back to the bronze age", *Guardian*, 20 May 2011.

³²² "Religious youth", *Today's Zaman*, 12 February 2012; "Turkey passes school reform law critics view as Islamic", *Reuters*, 30 March 2012.

once frequently handled cases of those charged with insulting Atatürk or Turkishness, gradually became preoccupied with the cases of those charged with insulting Islam or the Prophet.³²³ Altogether, these initiatives constituted the launch of a state-driven social engineering project that was in many ways a religious-conservative reproduction of the Kemalist guardians' attempts to impose a strictly secular and Turkish national identity on a multi-ethnic and multicultural population.

These moves were meant to please and consolidate the AKP's core conservative base, at which they succeeded. But they also increasingly alienated non-religious citizens or religious minorities, gradually pitting various opponents of the government against its passionate supporters. In an environment where legislation was forced through the parliament without meaningful dialogue with the opposition parties or civil society organisations, and mega infrastructure projects were developed and tendered without due public consultation to a small number of contractors with personal links to the government, anti-government demonstrations – and heavy handed police response – became the norm. A day before the outbreak of the Gezi protests, Chief Justice Kılıç, who had opposed the closure case against the AKP in 2008, warned the government from a liberal democratic standpoint:³²⁴

Human rights violations caused by state interference in the private lifestyle of the public have created incurable wounds to human dignity. Our political and social history is full of traces of interferences in certain segments of the public that were based on meaningless and imagined ideas. Adding a new wave of similar actions would further exhaust an already exhausted public conscience.

The divorce between the liberals and the conservatives was finalised in these circumstances, with many of the prime minister's liberal former supporters turning into his most outspoken critics. The most telling sign of this

³²³ Notoriously, pianist Fazıl Say was sentenced to 10 months in prison for tweeting a poem by eleventh century Persian philosopher Omar Khayyam judged to be denigrating religion. Some people, like the Turkish-Armenian writer and etymologist Sevan Nişanyan, were tried and sentenced under both the old order – for “insulting Turkishness” – and the new order, for “insulting the prophet”. See Barsoumian (2013).

³²⁴ “Top judge says interference in lifestyle hurts public conscience”, *Today's Zaman*, 30 May 2013.

separation was the fallout between the prime minister and Ahmet Altan, the former editor-in-chief of *Taraf* daily, who was sentenced to 11 months in prison for insulting Erdoğan. The chairman of the AKP, Aziz Babuşcu, did not mince his words as he declared the end of this alliance:

Those who were our stakeholders during the past decade will not be our stakeholders in the coming decade. [...] The liberals, for instance, were our stakeholders during this process. But the future is the era of construction. And this construction era will not be as [the liberals] wish. Hence, they will no longer be with us. [...] The Turkey that we will construct, the future that we will bring about, is not going to be a future that they will be able to accept.³²⁵

Framing any opposition to his will and overt criticism of his government's policies as an affront against 'the national will' (*milli irade*) that emerged from the elections, Prime Minister Erdoğan angrily labelled anti-government demonstrators as "looters and marauders".³²⁶ Thus, in a strictly minimalist/procedural application of the term, democracy became associated exclusively with the ballot box in post-Kemalist Turkey. Based on this observation, we can suggest that the transformation from Kemalist to post-Kemalist Turkey was essentially a transition from the institutional oversight of politics by a secular nationalist minority in a hybrid framework towards the rule of a religious nationalist 'relative-majority' driven by a patriarchal leader in a minimally democratic setting.³²⁷

³²⁵ "AK Partili Babuşcu'dan ilginç değerlendirme", *CNN Turk*, 31 March 2013, <http://www.cnnurk.com/2013/turkiye/03/31/ak-partili.babuscuilan.ilginc.degerlendirme/702371.0/>.

³²⁶ Erdoğan dismissed Gezi Park demonstrators as "marginal groups", "looters and marauders" and "piteous rodents" who resorted to violence because they could not win at the ballot box and had no respect for the national will. In contrast, President Gül commented at the height of the protests "democracy is not just about elections" and "if there are objections, there is nothing more natural than voicing them."

"Başbakan'dan Son Dakika: 'Terörist Holiganlar'", *Bianet*, 30 October 2012, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/141732-basbakan-dan-son-dakika-terorist-holiganlar>; "PM Erdoğan likens Gezi protesters to 'piteous rodents'", *Today's Zaman*, 24 July 2013; "Democracy is not just about elections, says Turkish President", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 3 June 2013.

³²⁷ The suggestion that the AKP commands the support of an absolute majority of voters in Turkey is misleading. We should note that the 58% and 50% support that the AKP received at the 2010 constitutional referendum and the 2011 general election respectively, which Erdoğan frequently emphasises to justify his 'national will' argument, was composed of diverse interest groups, some of which have been in clear opposition to his post-2011 policies as these were almost exclusively catered to the party's core conservative Sunni supporters. Therefore, it would

Equally important as defining the change is to determine that which has not changed. What appears to have survived in Turkey at least since the final centuries of the Ottoman Empire, through decades of Kemalist guardianship and into post-Kemalist era is the self-legitimising philosophy of patriarchal authority that considers the state a mechanism of social coercion, transformation and control, the historical roots of which I discussed in Chapter 2. In other words, political change in Turkey in the 2000s appears to have basically entailed the replacement of the old guard with a new one, not unlike the transfer of patriarchal authority from the Ottoman sultans to the westernised bureaucrats and officers at the turn of the twentieth century, without a fundamental evolution in the philosophy of government.

The enduring culture of guardianship in post-Kemalist Turkey – i.e. the continued lack of public accountability of groups and individuals within the state that act above the law and society in the name of the state and society – becomes visible when one reviews the critical court cases concluded during the AKP's third term. The internationally followed trial of journalist Hrant Dink ended in January 2012 after five years of bureaucratic delays, covered up evidence and disappearing witnesses, with a verdict that left senior bureaucrats and police officers implicated in the assassination untouched and, eventually, promoted.³²⁸ In March, citing a time limit and without handing out any sentence to the suspects, the court threw out the slow moving case of the 33 mostly Alevi poets, writers and intellectuals who were killed by a mob led by prominent Sunni Islamists in 1993.³²⁹

At the same time, allegations of political interference and legal inconsistencies in the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases dashed initial hopes that these investigations would expose and cleanse the state of its criminal 'deeper' elements.³³⁰ Instead of bringing to justice unlawful acts committed under the

be more appropriate to speak of a 'relative majority', i.e. the electoral support that allowed the AKP to form a single-party government since 2002.

³²⁸ "Turkey fails to deliver justice for murdered Armenian journalist as trial ends", *Amnesty International*, 16 January 2012.

³²⁹ "Sivas massacre case dropped due to statute of limitations", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 13 March 2012

³³⁰ In 2012, when specially authorised prosecutors attempted to question the chief of the National Intelligence Agency (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, MİT) Hakan Fidan, for his confidential

guise of a particular idea – *Ulusalçılık*/Eurasianism – the prosecutors effectively criminalised the idea itself and targeted their advocates. The arrests of two respected journalists, Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener, further discredited the trials and bolstered the impression that they had become a tool that the ruling party and its supporters were using to marginalise their political opponents.³³¹ Şık was a member of the *Nokta* team that had published the ‘coup diaries’ in 2007 and was working on a book manuscript investigating the Gülen network’s influence inside the police force, while Şener’s award-winning reporting implicated senior police officers in the Dink murder.³³²

Finally, despite the widening scope of the indictments and the sheer number of suspects, the investigations failed to expose the role of security sector actors and the ‘counter-guerrilla’ in the political scandals and human rights violations in Turkey’s recent history, especially in the context of the Kurdish war of the 1990s. On 28 December 2011, an aerial bombardment by Turkish jets killed 34 Kurdish civilians, apparently mistaken for PKK militants, near the village of Roboski along the Iraqi border. The government’s reluctance to conduct a transparent public investigation and the military prosecutor’s eventual dismissal of the case in January 2014 can be seen as evidence of the ongoing culture of legal impunity both within the TSK and the state in general.³³³

The intra-Islamist split and crisis in post-Kemalist Turkey

2012 and 2013 proved to be increasingly testing years for ‘the Great Master’ and his AKP. The violent sectarian dynamic of the Syrian conflict, which the Turkish government once hoped to manipulate, destabilised Turkey with a bulging refugee influx, growing tensions between Turkey’s own Sunni and the Alevi communities, and deteriorating diplomatic and economic relations with its

contacts with PKK leaders in Oslo during the Kurdish ‘opening’ in 2009, the AKP government abolished these courts as well, except for the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials.

³³¹ See chapter on Turkey in HRW (2013: 487 – 493).

³³² “Arrest of Turkish reporters raises doubts over Ergenekon case, *Index on Censorship*, 11 March 2011.

³³³ “Turkish military prosecutors dismiss investigation into Uludere massacre”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 7 January 2014.

southern and eastern neighbours.³³⁴ Turkey also faced simultaneous security threats from the Syrian military, jihadist groups and a renewed Kurdish drive for autonomy along its border with Syria. The twin explosions in the border town of Reyhanlı on 11 May 2013, killing 51 people, was the worst single terror attack in Turkey's history and the government's rushed attempt to impose a media blackout on the incident demonstrated the scale of the crisis (Akkoyunlu 2013).

More people died in clashes between the PKK and the security forces between mid-2011 and late 2012 than in the previous decade (ICG 2012). In early 2013, the two sides agreed on a ceasefire and launched renewed negotiations for a settlement based on an implicit peace for power bargain, whereby the government would grant the Kurds' some of their cultural and political rights in return for Kurdish support for Erdoğan's presidential ambitions. To this end, in March 2013, the PKK announced laying arms and withdrawing its militants from Turkey. However, beset by long-standing distrust, the negotiations were also affected by the growing socio-political instability after June 2013. In September, the PKK halted the withdrawal process, citing the government's failure to fulfill previously agreed-upon confidence building measures.

The government's heavy handed response to the Gezi protests and Erdoğan's repeated public accusations of western complicity in them seriously strained the AKP government's alliance with – and the prime minister's reputation amongst – Turkey's western allies.³³⁵ In July 2013, the military coup against Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood-led elected government deprived the AKP of a key ally in the 'new' Middle East. The Turkish government's frustration at the muted western response to the coup and the Obama administration's reluctance to intervene militarily in Syria was reflected in the phrase "precious loneliness", coined by Erdoğan's chief foreign policy adviser Ibrahim Kalın, to describe Turkey's increasingly unfavourable but supposedly noble geopolitical

³³⁴ "Red Cross says Turkey needs help to cope with Syrian exodus", *Today's Zaman*, 12 November 2012

³³⁵ See "EU voices concern over violent clashes in İstanbul's Taksim", *Today's Zaman*, 31 May 2013; "Readout of President Obama's Call with Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey", Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, 24 June 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/24/readout-president-obamas-call-prime-minister-erdogan-turkey>; Sedat Ergin, "The codes of Obama's new view on Turkey", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 30 August 2013.

predicament. In a poignant sign of the shifting dynamics in the region, Egypt's military government expelled the Turkish ambassador from Cairo and downgraded ties with Ankara hours before Iran and the P5+1 countries signed the nuclear agreement in Geneva.

Arguably the most critical development concerning Turkey's political and institutional future took place against this backdrop in the final days of 2013. This is the very public falling out of the followers of Prime Minister Erdoğan and Fethullah Gülen's Hizmet movement. As I noted in the previous chapter, the rivalry between the two strands of political Islam – the 'pragmatic strand' associated with Hizmet and the 'ideological strand' represented by Welfare – during the 1990s was such that Fethullah Gülen had supported the military coup against Welfare in 1997. It was only after the military guardians subsequently turned against Gülen and when Erdoğan, Gül and other young Islamists declared their departure from ideological politics that the AKP and Hizmet entered into an alliance against the Kemalists in the 2000s. Now, similar to the liberal-conservative divorce, with the disappearance of their common foe, their competing worldviews and agendas resurfaced.

Underlying the intra-Islamist divide lay Erdoğan's ambitious drive for personal power, the perception among the pragmatists that he has returned to his ideological roots, and the geopolitical implications of this suspected return (Akyol 2014). Himself based in the US since 2000, Gülen's movement has long advocated close ties with the West, especially the United States and including Israel. Erdoğan's increasingly sharp public denunciations of Israel, accusations of the West for supporting the Gezi protests, his statements – widely dismissed as a joke at first – in support of joining the Shanghai Cooperation Council, which is led by Russia and China, instead of the EU, and his government's negotiations with China for missile procurement despite NATO's opposition manifestly contradicted Hizmet's worldview and geopolitical priorities.³³⁶ Gülen publicly criticised Erdoğan and the AKP government for the first time during the international crisis following the deadly raid by Israeli commandoes of a

³³⁶ "Turkish PM Erdoğan to Putin: Take us to Shanghai", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 22 November 2013; "Turkey on China missile deal: Game not over yet", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 5 November 2013.

Turkish-led aid flotilla headed to Gaza in May 2010.³³⁷ During the Gezi protests, leading Hizmet newspapers *Zaman* and *Today's Zaman* openly and sharply criticised government officials, including Erdoğan.

The split turned into open battle in late 2013, after a move by the government to shut down private preparatory schools (*dershane*), which serve as a major financial resource and recruitment base for Hizmet in Turkey.³³⁸ In a seeming retaliation, on 17 December, a large-scale corruption investigation was launched against the AKP government, implicating senior ministers, their sons and influential businesspeople close to the prime minister with allegations of bribery, money laundering and illegal provision of building permits and public contracts. The operation was led by prosecutors and members of the police close to the Hizmet movement, such as Zekeriya Öz, who was also the chief prosecutor of the Ergenekon trial. Reminiscent of the Kemalist critics of these trials, Erdoğan labelled the corruption operation a “bureaucratic coup” against the government, and accused Fethullah Gülen of building a “parallel state” inside the judiciary and the police force.³³⁹ He also accused “some foreign ambassadors” for being behind the investigation and threatened them with expulsion.³⁴⁰

The conflict escalated quickly to involve a major cabinet reshuffle and resignations of the implicated ministers and dissident MPs from the ruling party. In an attempt to block a second indictment that implicated other senior AKP figures, including Erdoğan’s own family, the government purged hundreds of senior police officers and prosecutors thought to be sympathisers of Hizmet. In response to the purges, secret recordings of incriminating phone conversations allegedly between Erdoğan and his close entourage were leaked to the internet.³⁴¹ In an apparent move to win the support of the Kemalists, a senior aide to the prime minister declared that the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials had been a plot set up by the “parallel state” against “our nation’s military”. As I was concluding this thesis, the government was also engaged in backdoor

³³⁷ “Reclusive Turkish Imam Criticizes Gaza Flotilla”, *Wall Street Journal*, 4 June 2010.

³³⁸ “Feud between Turkey’s Erdogan and influential cleric goes public”, *Reuters*, 21 November 2013;

³³⁹ “PM says state will fight against the ‘virus’ in its midst” *Sabah English*, 11 January 2014; “Probing Erdoğan’s ‘parallel state’”, *Today’s Zaman*, 12 January 2014.

³⁴⁰ “Ricciardone refutes claims US ‘behind Turkey graft probe’”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 21 December 2013.

³⁴¹ “Turkish PM says tapes of talk with son a fabrication”, *Reuters*, 25 February 2014.

negotiations with the secularist opposition for a possible retrial of the generals found guilty in the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases.³⁴² In this atmosphere of sustained political instability, the lira depreciated sharply, forcing the Central Bank to intervene by radically increasing interest rates.³⁴³

As Turkey entered a year featuring at least two elections – local elections in the spring and the first direct presidential election scheduled for autumn – the outcome of the ‘Islamist fratricide’ and its impact on the country’s political future and institutional architecture appeared difficult to fathom. A victory for Erdoğan would almost certainly render his rule even more paranoid and lead to a swift decline into robust dictatorship. Indeed, two pieces of legislation forced through the GNA in February 2014 to block the indictments and the leaks, which tighten the executive’s control over the judiciary and the internet, and a draft bill granting sweeping powers and immunities to the government-controlled intelligence agency, herald the arrival of this dictatorship. On the other hand, Erdoğan’s defeat, especially if it comes through non-democratic means, would lead to an altogether different case of political uncertainty and economic insecurity, in the course of which growing portions of the populace could favour a return to hybridity for the sake of stability. This could be under a new set of guardians, such as Fethullah Gülen’s wealthy, opaque and highly influential US-based Islamic fraternity, or even the old national ones. At the beginning of 2014, the return of the military to the political scene, especially in the case of a prolonged institutional crisis and a retrial in the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases, could not be ruled out as a possibility.

In the midst of the government’s strained ties with the West and growing economic instability, the battle between Erdoğan and Gülen risked unravelling the Islamists’ control of post-Kemalist Turkey, just as a split inside the military-bureaucratic establishment under comparable geopolitical and economic conditions had brought an end to the Kemalist guardianship. However, regardless of the outcome of this power struggle, the prospects for substantial democratisation in Turkey looked grim, given the enduring culture of patriarchal

³⁴² “Turkey ‘coup plot’: PM Erdogan ‘favours retrial’”, *BBC News*, 6 January 2014,

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-25617637>.

³⁴³ “Turkish central bank makes massive rate hikes to stem lira fall”, *Reuters*, 28 January 2014.

authority and the extent of the damage this latest process has inflicted on the already tenuous rational-legal foundations of Turkey's state institutions.

Conclusion

The dynamics and outcomes of post-hybridity in Iran and Turkey appear to support the two hypotheses concerning transformations from hybrid regimes, which I outlined in Chapter 1. Both cases serve as examples for the possibility of a return to hybridity in the event of a prolonged socio-political crisis or institutional instability in a post-hybrid setting. In the event of post-2009 Iran, it was the traditionalist guardians who deliberately worked to revive the IRI's republican pillar, having discovered the risks and the difficulty of controlling the state and society in the absence of popular support and legitimacy. If Turkey returns to hybridity, which was within the realm of possibility at the beginning of 2014, this would not be a deliberate move but rather as a result of an internal feud among the two strands of political Islam, which claimed control of the state following the fall of the Kemalist guardians.

What the Turkish case demonstrates vividly is that the victory of the electoral pillar over the guardianship pillar does not guarantee the consolidation of substantial democracy in a post-hybrid setting. Indeed, the prevalence of state patriarchy under Turkey's elected Islamist government suggests that political culture may be harder to change than institutions and political actors. In the Conclusion that follows, I will engage in a comparative analysis of the Iranian and Turkish experiences of hybridity and question the significance of the observations made throughout this thesis for the study of hybrid regimes.

CONCLUSION

Having discussed the processes of formation, consolidation and institutionalisation of the Iranian and Turkish hybrid regimes in Chapters 2 to 4, and the core dynamics, major debates and key actors that have influenced the critical turning points for the two regimes in the 1990s and the 2000s in Chapters 5 to 7, I will conclude with a comparative analysis of the two cases based on the three concentric spheres of change (structural dynamics, institutions and human agency), which I outlined in the Introduction to the thesis. What have we learned about the nature and dynamics of socio-political and institutional change in Iran and Turkey by studying these within the framework of hybridity and in light of the five hypotheses I put forth in Chapter 1? At the same time, how do these cases help us answer the general questions I put forth about hybrid regimes in the Introduction? Finally, where do guardianship and hybrid regimes fit within the evolving constellation of political systems in the twenty-first century?

Reviewing the Khomeinist and Kemalist hybrid regimes

As I noted throughout the thesis, the underlying similarity between the Iranian and Turkish republics is (or was, before the fall of Kemalist guardianship in Turkey) the existence of a dualistic arrangement whereby institutions of guardianship are placed above and exert limitations on the political authority of electoral institutions. Preserving the ideological legacy of the charismatic founding fathers is the self-assigned and proclaimed role of the guardians in both regimes. Despite this role, we notice a **lack of ideological consistency** within the Iranian and Turkish guardianship institutions over time and amongst different factions. In any given period, we come across multiple and conflicting

interpretations of Kemalism and Khomeinism propagated by different factional groups and generations.

This ideological inconsistency is more immediately observable in the IRI, where factional divisions are publicly acknowledged and institutionalised, than in Turkey. One could suggest that this is in part due to the decentralised and relatively pluralistic structure of the Shia clergy, which forms the basis of guardianship in the IRI, as opposed to the more exclusive and hierarchically organised military in Turkey. As I explained in Chapter 4, rival interpretations of Shi'a jurisprudence, alongside the varying prioritisation of the revolution's key promises for the diverse groups that took part in it, lie at the root of factional divisions in Iran. Albeit less publicly visible, divisions within the republican elite in Turkey have also had a decisive impact on the evolution of the regime's hybrid character from the outset. The earliest and the most persistent division was that between the statist officers and bureaucrats on the one hand and the economically liberal, socially conservative entrepreneurs and landowners on the other. While the former group consolidated its institutional authority over the state with the 1960 coup, internal rivalries continued to impact the military-bureaucratic establishment in the following decades.

The fact that of the four successful interventions carried out by the Turkish military between 1960 and 1997, two were against right-wing governments (1960 and 97) while the other two targeted primarily the wide spectrum of leftist movements (1971 and 80) demonstrates the extent of the ideological fluctuation and contestation amongst guardians over time. The free market reforms and the 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' imposed by the 1980 junta stand in stark contrast both with the secular statist worldview of the 1960 junta and the secularist agenda of the perpetrators of the 1997 intervention; yet each were carried out under the pretext of safeguarding 'Atatürk's principles and revolution'. Internal rivalries also dominated the TSK at various critical junctures: it was a group of junior officers who broke from the chain of command that carried out the 1960 coup. The 1971 intervention was a right-wing coup in response to a failed attempt by leftist officers three days previously. Finally, as I discussed in Chapter 6, the division within the military-bureaucratic guardians

during the 2000s proved instrumental in allowing the AKP to push through reforms that dismantled the Kemalist guardianship.

Rather than being first and foremost the embodiment of a well-defined and fixed ideological worldview, then, guardianship should be understood primarily as a mechanism through which one political group endeavours to impose its will over others and ultimately over the whole society. The guardian state, in other words, is an instrument of power preservation and imposition in the service of an ideology, whose name (i.e. Kemalism, Khomeinism) stays fixed but precepts and priorities are frequently reinterpreted on the basis of the evolving worldviews and selective memories of competing elite groups, and the changing power relations amongst them, in conjunction with the wider shifts in socio-economic and geopolitical dynamics.

What we can say in terms of philosophical consistency for all the different factions that have vied to take charge of the institutions of guardianship in both cases is a **distrust of majority rule** – the defining characteristic of guardianship everywhere. As an instrument of power, guardianship allows for socio-political minority groups that are unlikely to win in competitive elections to maintain disproportionate influence over the entire body politic. The realisation that they stand to lose from ‘unguarded’ electoral politics prompts these groups to focus their energies on maintaining their grip over the institutions of guardianship and strengthening them against electoral institutions. Yet the more they rely on the guardianship institutions, the more deeply their minority status and apprehension of the masses become entrenched. It was the successive election defeats of the CHP during the 1950s that drove the Kemalists to establish a new guardianship structure through a series of *coups d'état*. Likewise, the sweeping victories secured by the reformists in the 1997 presidential and 2000 Majles elections in Iran provoked the traditionalist guardians to manipulate elections more rigorously and openly in the future, culminating in the mass protests after the 2009 election.

These examples also remind us of the **continually fluctuating boundaries** between the two pillars of the hybrid regimes. A casual observer looking at the two countries in the late 1990s would conclude that while the space for electoral politics was expanding in Iran, following the landslide victory

of Khatami against the will of the traditionalist guardians, this space was shrinking in Turkey, where the military had toppled yet another democratically elected government. Revisiting them a decade later and seeing Iran after its contested 2009 election and Turkey in the midst of the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases, the judicial reform process and the AKP's third election victory, the observer would likely reach the opposite conclusion.

These fluctuating boundaries notwithstanding, we also observe in both regimes a long-term trend through which **the guardians gradually expand their institutional and constitutional jurisdiction**. Despite deepening and intensifying the feud between the two factions of the republican elite by executing the three most senior and popular members of the *Demokrat Parti* government, the 1960 coup in Turkey actually put in place a relatively benign system of guardianship. The main aim of the 1961 Constitution was to prevent the accumulation of power in the hands of the executive by introducing a bi-cameral legislative system, strengthening the judiciary and institutionalising the military's guardianship role through the NSC. It also provided greater protection for civil rights and liberties than any past or future constitution. These rights were systematically curtailed and the military's guardianship role intensified with subsequent interventions. The political and institutional arrangement that the 1982 Constitution put in place was a highly authoritarian one that sought to increase the state's control over society and discourage independent thinking and political activism by securitising the political space, promoting a culture of mass consumerism and propagating loyalty to the state's patriarchal authority.

In Iran, the expansion and legalisation of the Leader's powers with the 1989 Constitution, the 1991 re-interpretation of the Guardian Council's authorities and the 2008 Majles decision exempting the Leader from any theoretical parliamentary oversight are among key moments of the growth of the guardians' formal authority. Parallel to this formal accumulation of power is the informal process that includes the expansion of the Leader's grip over major state institutions through his personal representatives, his control over the *bonyads*, the growing politico-economic weight of the IRGC as well as the guardians' above-mentioned manipulation of the electoral process by methods that exceed their formal authority. In both cases, the predominant tendency of

those who held unaccountable power has been to maximise it – not to relinquish or share it with others.

Yet despite this tendency, the guardians in both countries have **shied away from continuous direct rule** without popular legitimacy, even at the peak of their institutional authority. If one of the lessons of the Khatami era for the traditionalist guardians in Iran was to tighten the controls over electoral institutions and search for a presidential candidate who would be loyal to the Leader, the other was the need for the traditionalists to be able to compete in popular politics. This, for instance, led Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, a firm believer in absolute guardianship who dismisses entirely the people's role in legitimising political authority, to support and encourage the rise of the neo-conservatives as a populist antidote to the reformists. Likewise, the popular legitimacy crisis that engulfed the regime after the 2009 election eventually led Khamenei and the traditionalist guardians to restore the republican pillar of the regime and tolerate the re-entry of Rafsanjani and Khatami into the political arena in the 2013 presidential election for the sake of the regime's stability and the guardians' own security.

In Turkey, the decision to return power to civilian governments after every intervention attests to the military guardians' reluctance to rule directly. The Kemalist guardians found it more effective and beneficial to manage the country's affairs behind the stage, while allowing elected politicians to bear the burden of public opinion, which helps explain the longevity of the Turkish hybrid regime. Although some guardians may view elections and elected officials as inconveniences that they have to contend with and, when possible, emasculate, the republican pillar is also a key source of legitimacy for the regime that the guardians cannot easily do without.

Competitive elections, in particular, are the *sine qua non* of hybrid regimes. In Turkey, widespread and longstanding public confidence in the process and declared outcome of elections – i.e. the overwhelming belief that voting will take place regularly and free of systemic manipulation – has provided legitimacy and stability to the political system in Turkey. In numerous episodes of political crisis and institutional rivalry, elections were used to resolve deadlocks and deflate socio-political tensions, a recent example being the row

over Abdullah Gül's presidential candidacy in 2007. The assumption that they would eventually get a chance to express their views through the ballot box may have rendered the people more patient vis-à-vis military interventions as well, since the electorate regularly defied the generals' declared preferences in elections following periods of direct military rule.

The Kemalist guardians toppled elected governments, created electoral hurdles to bar the entry of unwanted political parties into the GNA, and frequently shut down parties and banned politicians. That being said, from 1950 onwards, the military-bureaucratic guardians respected the sanctity of the ballot box, even when popular political movements that emerged from it jeopardised the institutional supremacy of Kemalist guardians. Conversely, it was their victory in seven successive elections – three general, two local and two referenda – between 2002 and 2011 that gradually solidified the AKP's claim to be the sole representative of the 'nation's will' not only in their fight against the guardians, but also – much more problematically – in a post-hybrid setting against any popular opposition against the party's and the prime minister's policies and worldview. While elections are the minimum requirement of democracies (and of democratic pillars in hybrid regimes), post-Kemalist Turkey stands as a good example of the shortcomings of a minimalistic/procedural interpretation of democracy that focuses solely on the process and the outcome of elections.

The level of public trust in the integrity of elections has been arguably lower in Iran, where the guardians have restricted participation since the establishment of the IRI and there has been a growing perception of manipulation of the vote at least since the Majles election in 2000. Even so, the belief that elections can affect factional power dynamics has persistently driven the Iranian people to vote on election days. For its turn, the regime elite has used elections as an effective mechanism of managing popular participation in politics, socialising the youth into the IRI system as well as negotiating factional rivalries. The key function of elections in holding together the IRI system became manifest in 2009, when the perception of massive fraud led to a major clash between the state and society that threatened the very fabric of the political system, and again in 2013, when the traditionalist guardians allowed for an

apparently fraud-free election to take place at the risk of a victory for the traditionalists' two pragmatist and reformist rivals.

The guardians' concern for popular legitimacy and their desire to operate within a hybrid institutional structure rather than a system of direct rule also remind us of the existence of an **organic bond that exists between the guardians and the society** from which they emerge. Despite their distrust of mass politics, in other words, guardians are not intrinsically alien products that are imposed on society from outside. On the contrary, with their authority based on their institutional role in the popular movements that gave birth to the two republics as well as on their claim to the charismatic legitimacy of the founding fathers, the guardians take strength from the enduring predilection for patriarchal authority among sections of the Iranian and Turkish society. This predilection both predates and, as is seen in the case of post-Kemalist Turkey, can outdate hybrid regimes.

In Iran, patriarchal authority remains highly personalised. This is reflected in the factional organisation of politics, which is relatively informal and reliant on individual leadership and intra-elite networks. Politics in the IRI is driven by personalities as much as by ideas, and more than by organisations and institutions. The institutional architecture of the hybrid regime, namely the rivalry between the Leader and an elected president who can embody the enduring popular demand for a champion of the people's rights, also reflects the historical "dialectic of state and society" that I discussed in Chapter 2. In contrast, in the same chapter, I emphasised the hierarchically unified conceptualisation of state and society in Turkey. The dominant symbols of patriarchal authority here have been the state, the fatherland and the nation (also, re-emerging with the AKP, Islam); notions that the Kemalist guardians, their late Ottoman predecessors and their Islamist successors have all claimed to serve. While authority has been bureaucratised to a significant degree in Turkey when compared to Iran – as evidenced by the prominence of organised party structures in politics and the guardianship of institutions rather than individuals – we can speak of a popular penchant for charismatic leadership here as well. Indeed, Turkey does not seem to have devised a third alternative between the

institutionalised elite guardianship and populist charismatic leadership, represented most recently by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

That said, in both countries, urban-based and youth-driven popular movements that defy the arbitrary use of state power by appointed or elected patriarchs symbolise the persistent demand for accountable and pluralistic government. In Iran, the century-long quest for institutionalising a fully accountable, popularly sanctioned, rule-of-law based constitutional system is ongoing despite frequent setbacks and suppressions. In Turkey, both the demonstrations following the assassination of Hrant Dink in 2007 and the Gezi demonstrations of 2013 were driven by similar popular demands. Whether or not these spontaneous grassroots movements can give rise to organised and ideologically coherent political mechanisms, without compromising on their pluralistic and civilian character, will determine the extent to which patriarchal authority can be challenged in Iran and Turkey in the years to come.

Explaining divergent outcomes of change

A question that arises from a comparison of the processes of change in the Iranian and Turkish hybrid regimes since the late 1990s concerns the divergent end result of these processes. Iran from 1997 and Turkey from 2002 saw the election of popular governments that confronted the authority of the guardians. In Iran, the traditionalist guardians were able to obstruct and ultimately suppress both the reform movement led by Khatami and the more unexpected challenge by the Ahmadinejad government, albeit at the expense of the regime's democratic legitimacy and stability. In Turkey, the AKP government was able to overcome the guardians' resistance and ultimately dismantle the system of military-bureaucratic guardianship. How did the guardians persevere in Iran and succumb in Turkey, and what could these divergent outcomes tell us about the dynamics of change in hybrid regimes?

Structure: The role of geopolitics

There is a case to be made that the geopolitical rivalry between the IRI and the West (particularly the United States) has actually strengthened the Islamic pillar of the hybrid regime and provided it with added legitimacy at the expense of the republican pillar in at least two ways. First, the diversion from politico-economic reliance on the West, and the subsequent diversification of Iran's strategic and economic alliances, has rendered the regime more resilient in the face of sustained western pressure for regime change. Here, Iran's natural resource wealth needs to be noted. While on the whole oil has been a destabilising factor for Iran, its role in sustaining the IRI's economy and providing alternative trade partners in spite of western-backed sanctions cannot be ignored. The prominence of the energy sector in the national economy has allowed for the state (and guardianship institutions like the IRGC) to remain the dominant player in the economy and, by extension, politics.

Secondly, the existence of sustained ideological confrontation with the West has bolstered the regime's anti-imperialist and anti-western character, often at the expense of civil liberties and the rule of law. As such, from Rafsanjani to Khatami, leaders who advocated a normalisation of relations between Iran and the West often found themselves treading a precarious line, exposing themselves to criticism from the traditionalist guardians of jeopardising the IRI's sovereignty or, worse, collaborating with the enemy. Similarly, the reformist discourse of strengthening civil society and the rule of law was readily portrayed by the traditionalists as manifestation of 'western cultural invasion', which needed to be eradicated. Indeed, the reformists had to fight an uphill battle to frame their agenda as not western-inspired or liberal, but authentic to the Iranian revolution and true to the charismatic leader's legacy.

In contrast, the two basic tenets of Kemalism – national sovereignty and cultural westernisation – pulled the regime in opposite directions and created an internal tension among the guardians as to which had to be prioritised. Turkey's membership in NATO in 1952 was not so much driven by cultural concerns, but by geostrategic pragmatism and the historically-rooted fear of Russian expansionism. Nonetheless, it did cost the Turkish republic its sovereignty to the

extent that Turkey's domestic socio-political trajectory and foreign relations had to be in tandem with the expectations of the western security establishment. As the Turkish military became firmly embedded within the NATO structure, the TSK also came to rely on the extensive support provided by the western security establishment to maintain its supra-political position. Every successful intervention by the military guardians in politics had to be backed or approved by the western security establishment. The transfer of this support from the military to the liberal-conservative coalition in the early 2000s, in the framework of the European Union's liberal democratisation agenda and the US promotion of the AKP as a 'moderate Islamist' model as part of its 'war on terror', has been crucial to the process of dismantling the system of Kemalist guardianship.

In contrast to the Iranian reformists, the elected officials in Turkey had the advantage of both geopolitics and discourse. Not only were the guardians deprived of the West's institutional support during the 2000s, but also, due to resource-poor Turkey's extensive integration into international markets and reliance on foreign direct investment, they were unable to intervene as directly and openly in the political process as their predecessors or Iranian counterparts could. The liberal-conservative coalition was able to promote the AKP's reform agenda by persuasively arguing for macro-economic stability and growth, Europeanisation and democratisation; goals to which the military guardians themselves had, until recently, paid lip service. These attracted more popular support than the discourse of national sovereignty that the *Ulusalçı*/Eurasianist opposition championed in the 2000s.

Institutions: Constitutional sanction, mission and division of powers

Another important difference that explains the divergent outcomes of the reform attempts in Iran and Turkey in the 2000s concerns the constitutional sanction of guardianship in the two countries. As I discussed in detail in Chapter 4, the system of Islamic guardianship of the Iranian state and society has been laid out and enshrined explicitly in the IRI's constitutions on the basis of Ayatollah Khomeini's *velayat-e faqih* theory. The powers and responsibilities of every major institution of the Islamic pillar, namely, the Office of the Leader, the

Guardian Council, the Expediency Council and the IRGC, were laid out in the IRI's first constitution, which was prepared under the leadership of Khomeini and presented to popular vote in 1979. Although critical changes to the Leader's and the Guardian Council's powers were made in 1989 and 1991, the foundational legitimacy of these institutions as direct products of the Iranian revolution remained intact. This explicit and powerful constitutional, charismatic and revolutionary confirmation in turn allowed the guardians to exert their authority openly and forcefully, when challenged both by the reformists and the neo-conservatives – by impeaching ministers or influencing their appointment, disqualifying candidates, blocking legislation as well as using force to intimidate or suppress popular dissent.

In contrast, the guardianship role of the Turkish military was based on tenuous legal and ideological bases from the outset. Although the institutions established as a result of coups, such as the NSC, the RTÜK or the YÖK, are constitutionally recognised, there is no direct reference to the military's guardianship role in any of Turkey's constitutions. The legal context with which the military attempted to justify its interventions was based on Article 35 of the TSK's Internal Service Law, which was itself a product of the 1960 coup. Furthermore, despite Atatürk's designation of the Turkish military as the guide and guardian of the young republic, the hybrid institutional architecture that emerged after 1960 was not designed personally by the charismatic leader. As I noted in Chapter 4, Atatürk even forbade serving officers from active engagement in politics (whereas Khomeini openly encouraged the clergy to be politically active).

Lacking a clear mandate from the charismatic leader and an explicit constitutional backing, the hybrid system that emerged in Turkey as a result of the successive military coups needed constant historical, social, religious and geopolitical justification. These also forced the guardians to assume a less visible role than their Iranian counterparts: compare the systemic attempts to hide the existence of an internal mechanism of socio-political coercion (i.e. the counter-guerilla) in Turkey against the publicly acknowledged and institutionalised nature of this mechanism in Iran (i.e. the IRGC, the *Basij* and the *Hezbollahi* vigilante groups).

While Turkey's position as a frontier country along the East/West axis during the Cold War provided the Kemalist guardians with a long-term geopolitical *raison d'être*, the end of the Cold War gradually made the Turkish guardians more vulnerable to changes in the public opinion. In the 2000s, the AKP politicians successfully framed and legitimised their reform agenda as targeting the system of *coups d'état* established after 1960, rather than the Kemalist revolution of the 1920s and 30s, even though this was where most religious citizens' grievances actually lay. The government's presentation of the 12 September 2010 referendum as score settling with the 1980 coup was a particular case in point. In contrast, the debate over reform in the IRI has been directly and inseparably linked to the ideological and institutional legacy of the 1979 revolution and Khomeini's political teachings.

This difference is rooted in the original mission of guardianship as set by the two charismatic leaders. Despite the numerous practical changes to the political system during and after his lifetime, Khomeini's *velayat-e faqih* system was formulated as a theoretical final product. Steeped in esoteric Sufi mysticism, Khomeini believed that human beings could reach perfection (*ensan-e kamel*) and achieve wisdom (*erfan*) through correct and rigorous teaching of Islamic jurisprudence and morals. But he did not expect all human beings to reach this higher state; nor did he believe this was necessary. Consequently, a group of learned scholars, the *mojtahed*, were tasked permanently with steering the Islamic community in the right direction. Khomeini did not designate a point in time where the society was expected to reach a level of perfection that would render the *velayat-e faqih* system obsolete, as, for example, the socialist 'vanguard party' was expected to disappear once communism arrived.

In contrast, Atatürk did not envision guardianship to be a permanent fixture on Turkey's socio-political life. Like Lenin's vanguard party, the guardians of the Kemalist revolution, which were organised under the CHP and the military, were expected to work tirelessly to educate the masses on the basis of the secular, nationalist and westernising principles of the new republic. It was presumed (although not explicitly mandated) that once this mass education campaign succeeded at an undetermined point in the future, the people would be able to govern themselves without the need for guardians. As I noted in Chapter

4, many in the military-bureaucratic wing of the CHP saw President İnönü's decision to switch to a multiparty system in the late 1940s as a premature move and a potentially fatal blow to the Kemalist revolution. During the one decade of the DP government and in the course of the 1960 coup, these critics became convinced that henceforth the revolution had to be protected and continued through the indirect guardianship of the military and the bureaucracy.

As the TSK's guardianship role assumed a permanent shape, so did the guardians' claim that the people were still too immature to be trusted. Over the following decades, this claim drew criticism from those who argued, increasingly convincingly, that it was precisely the military's patriarchal presence that had inhibited Turkey's democratic development. The liberal democratic critique of Kemalist guardianship was eventually built on this counter-argument.

Human Agency: The impact of leadership

In conjunction with structural and institutional factors, human agency has also had significant impact during critical political junctures. A key contrast appears to be the persistence and determination displayed by the leaders of the two countries' reform movements. In discussing the reformist attempts to strengthen the republican pillar and define the limits of the guardians' authority, I noted that Khatami repeatedly retreated from open confrontation with his traditionalist rivals. Khatami's role in the defeat of the reform movement – i.e. his reluctance to defy the guardians at critical moments, out of a fear of civil strife or the institutional collapse of the hybrid regime – should not be exaggerated. Certainly, his failure to institutionalise an effective party structure to organise and lead civil society, the reformists' failure to emphasise social justice as part of their political discourse and the traditionalists' recourse to systemic violence to suppress the movement were also influential in the reformist defeat.

That being said, when one considers the dogged determination with which Ahmadinejad defended the prerogatives of his office against the Leader's interventions, leading to confrontations that threatened the Islamic pillar and the IRI establishment more openly than the reformist challenge, it becomes difficult to discount the argument that more steadfast leadership by Khatami at critical

junctures could have delivered strategic victories to the reform movement, which after all enjoyed a wider and more politically active proven support base than the neo-conservatives. Unlike Ahmadinejad, Khatami's instinct to preserve the hybrid regime kept him from picking risky fights with the guardians. Ultimately, it was the traditionalist guardians who presented a united and determined front against the reformist challenge, after a brief period of discord and confusion following Khatami's landslide victory in 1997. Likewise, had Ahmadinejad not owed his rise to the guardians whom he eventually turned against and, more importantly, had he the support of a wider and more politically active popular base, the traditionalists would have found it more difficult to fend off his attacks against the clerical establishment.

In comparison, the Turkish reformists, who had popular, institutional and geopolitical backing, stood their ground during moments of heightened tension with the guardians. The AKP government's persistence to nominate Abdullah Gül as its presidential candidate in 2007, despite the Constitutional Court's attempt to block the vote, the secularist mass rallies and the military's 'e-memorandum', stands out as a particularly fateful decision. Coming at a moment when neither side had yet managed to establish its authority over the other, the AKP's risky strategy to call for early general election paid off, as it emerged victorious from the ballot box and went on to have the reconvened GNA elect Gül as president. It was this victory over the guardians that tilted the balance of powers in the AKP's favour for the first time.

But the AKP government still may not have triumphed over the guardians was it not for the divisions amongst senior generals and judges. Here, I emphasise General Özkök's role in blocking two advanced coup plans by his senior staff in 2003 and 2004 and Chief Justice Kılıç's stance in opposition to the closure case against the AKP in 2008. In this respect, the divisions among the Turkish guardians stand in contrast to the hierarchical unity of the traditionalists in Iran under Khamenei. Of course, these fissures did not occur by chance. I already noted the existence of internal rivalries in the TSK, which surfaced in the 1960 and 1971 coups. Divisions became intensified in the 2000s when the guardians were forced to choose between reform and resistance. Meanwhile, the presence of a conservative judge at the top of the Turkish high judiciary at this

critical juncture was in part a long-term consequence of the promotion of conservative nationalist bureaucrats by the military junta and the centre-right ANAP government in the 1980s.

In both cases, structural and institutional factors informed and influenced key actor choices: both the determined stance of the elected officials and the divided nature of the guardians reflect an awareness of the uneven geopolitical playing field as well as the tenuous legal/ideological ground on which they stood. In Iran, the opposite was the case: favoured neither by geopolitical dynamics nor the constitutional division of powers, elected contenders of power were ultimately overcome by the dogged resistance of guardians, who had a tighter control over key political institutions and the economy.

General conclusions about political change in hybrid regimes

As we have seen, the divergent outcomes of the processes of change in Iran and Turkey were not only products of the differences in the institutional architectures of the two regimes, but also of particular structural factors and human agency. With so much resting on historical contingency, political culture, geopolitical factors and specific actor choices at critical junctures, it is both difficult and risky to generalise about the dynamics of political change in hybrid regimes. Without succumbing to such broad generalisations, then, what we can infer from the analysis of the two cases about the nature and the dynamics of change in hybrid regimes?

At the beginning of this thesis I questioned the nature of the relationship between guardianship and democracy in hybrid regimes and asked how these regimes reconciled the divided sovereignty between the *demos* and the *aristos*? As we have seen in the Iranian and Turkish cases, the guardians seek to legitimise their authority on the basis of tradition, their perceived role in the popular founding episodes of the republics, as well as by claiming the legacy of charismatic founding fathers. The culture of guardianship tends to be rooted in the existing societal justifications of patriarchal authority, be they expressed in the shape of state reverence or popular demand for charismatic leader figures.

Initially driven by the ambition to transform society from above, guardians in revolutionary polities suspend democratic promises, processes and institutions in part or in full. Over time, as the guardians' social engineering projects face resistance and suffer setbacks, guardianship tends to be entrenched as a power preservation mechanism at the same time as societal demands for popular representation grow. At this point, guardians increasingly resort to invoking a domestic and geopolitical threat perception to justify their continued role in politics. The ensuing process of competing, negotiating and bargaining for power between the *aristos* and the representatives of the *demos* represents the core dynamics of hybrid regimes.

A detailed analysis of the Iranian and Turkish cases supports my second hypothesis in Chapter 1 that the relationship between the two pillars of the hybrid regime is essentially one of conflict, making these regimes prone to periodic crises. Fluctuating boundaries of autonomy between the two pillars are signs of constant negotiation and redefinition of powers that lead to conflict and occasional political crises. Regular clashes between the Leader and the president, the Guardian Council and the Majles in Iran and periodic military interventions in Turkey are examples of the system's inherently conflicted nature. This is not to assume, as many contributors to the democratisation literature have done, that hybrid regimes are necessarily unstable short-term entities. On the contrary, the combination of authoritarian and democratic tools of governance and legitimation do seem to provide these regimes with a level of flexibility and resilience in the face of frequent systemic crises.

For the guardians, in particular, the existence of a democratic pillar grants the regime a degree of popular legitimacy that would be absent in a non-democratic setting. In non-democratic forms of government, once civic unrest breaks out it is more likely to target the regime's core institutional structures. In contrast, where there is some belief in the democratic legitimacy of a system, regime change tends to be a less widely and immediately desired goal for opposition groups. As such, while often driven with a power maximising instinct within the system, the guardians also have a vested interest in preserving the hybrid system. In this sense, the Iranian protests of 2009 and the Turkish protests of 2013 should be distinguished from the Arab uprisings of 2011 or, for

that matter, the Iranian revolution of 1979. The overwhelming demand in the first two cases was internal reform instead of revolution. That being said, popular perceptions of legitimacy can alter quickly and dramatically during the course of protests, as was the case in Iran in 2009 and, to a lesser extent, in Turkey in 2013. The perceived loss of the IRI's democratic credibility after the presidential election in 2009 led to increasingly vocal calls for regime change, which the guardians suppressed by force. Their move to re-establish this credibility with the 2013 election can be interpreted as a pre-emptive move to mitigate the risk of a more intensive popular backlash targeting the regime directly in the future.

Ultimately, the existence of two inimical sources of legitimation presents fertile ground for systemic tension. In turn, heightened and prolonged tensions can result in the collapse of one of the two pillars of the hybrid regime. Such a collapse is not a foregone conclusion as hybrid regimes are not, by definition, regimes in transition. However, given their built-in tension, the possibility of systemic change cannot be ruled out. Even less pre-ordained is the direction of change following transitions from hybridity. In conjunction with my argument above on the guardians' interest in maintaining hybridity, the example of Iran has demonstrated the possibility of a return to the hybrid regime following a period of authoritarian government, when the guardians conclude that direct rule is too risky and costly. A return to hybridity is also possible when elected officials prevail over guardians, especially if democratic institutions are not consolidated and/or there is widespread perception that elected officials are incompetent/unfit to govern. At the time of writing, this scenario could not be ruled out in Turkey, where elected politicians successfully dismantled the system of Kemalist guardianship during the 2000s but were unable to institutionalise a stable democratic system. Yet a more imminent scenario was the transition of Turkey from hybridity towards an authoritarian system in a minimally democratic setting under a leader-driven populist government that combined neo-liberal economic policies, charisma-driven state patriarchy and a conservative social engineering project.

The Turkish case clearly demonstrates that meeting the minimalistic/procedural requirement of democracy is not sufficient to label a

post-hybrid regime as democratising, if only for the fact that hybrid regimes also meet this minimum requirement of conducting competitive elections. More than a restructuring of institutions or a changeover of political elites, substantial democratisation necessitates an evolution in dominant socio-political attitudes towards a consensus view that considers government an open-ended and self-reproducing process of public reasoning, discussion and deliberation.

Thinking about guardianship and hybrid regimes in the twenty-first century

At the end of Dahl's Socratic dialogue between representatives of the *aristos* and the *demos*, the latter admits that guardianship has been a powerful vision throughout history and is likely to remain so in the future. "If democracy were to decline and disappear from human history in the centuries to come," the advocate of democracy speculates, "I think its place would be taken by hierarchical regimes claiming to be legitimate because they were governed by guardians of virtue and knowledge." (1989: 64). While democracy is unlikely to disappear as perhaps the most theoretically and practically compelling system of government in the foreseeable future, few can claim today that its most rigorously promoted version – the Anglo-Saxon liberal representative democracy – embodies the undisputed and ubiquitous vision for all humankind in the century to come.

Challenged both by its own internal socio-economic excesses, tensions and crises, and marred by its association with imperialism, the Anglo-Saxon liberal democratic idea has failed to live up to the claim that it is the system for 'the end of history'. Thus, as we move further away from the unipolar era of the 1990s, and from the problematic cultural, ideological and teleological assumptions of the third wave democratisation literature this era has produced, we are confronted with a diverse and evolving constellation of political systems and experiments, both national and supra-national, democratic and non-democratic. What place do direct guardianship and hybrid systems have in this constellation?

Direct (or absolute) guardianship, in its traditional or revolutionary forms, does not seem to be a feasible or attractive political model in the twenty-first century. As our two case studies have demonstrated, at the centre of the modern idea of guardianship is the preservation of state authority and the state's hegemonic role in controlling and shaping socio-economic life of a people within fixed borders. As the dynamics of globalisation and the emergence of supra-national politico-economic entities challenge these borders and the sovereign status of nation-states, state-dependent guardians tend to find it more difficult to maintain a hegemonic position over politics and society. Indeed, most of the world's existing monarchies today are either constitutional democracies, where royal families serve a purely ceremonial function, or hybrid regimes that combine traditional authority of the monarchs with varying degrees of constitutional government and electoral institutions. Virtually all the exceptions are the less populous resource rich 'rentier' states, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar or Brunei.

Facing a mix of popular unrest, external economic pressures and/or military intervention, military dictatorships from North Africa to Southeast Asia have either collapsed (Libya, Tunisia, Egypt), succumbed to civil war (Syria) or were forced to introduce a set of liberalising reforms (Burma). Communist one-party governments of China, Vietnam, and, to a lesser extent, Cuba, all of which enjoy varying degrees of popular support, too, are gradually opening up to international markets under pressures of financial globalisation. Finally, the Arab uprisings have revealed the underlying popular legitimacy gap in some of the wealthiest Gulf Arab monarchies that were long assumed to be highly stable.

We should be careful not to mistake these reforms and ruptures as signs of another wave of global democratisation or even a proliferation in hybrid regimes. In fact, many of these cases demonstrate that economic liberalism does not necessarily bring about political liberalisation. On the contrary, from China to Turkey, symptoms of 'neo-liberal authoritarianism' are becoming increasingly prevalent across all regime types and geographies. Neo-liberal authoritarianism implies an arrangement where national governments prioritise the interests of their domestic and international private supporters over the interests of the public. 'Symptoms' include high levels of collusion between politics, the private

sector, the media and the judiciary, and the proliferation of militarised law enforcement units specially trained to pacify frequent public demonstrations. This is a particularly complex crisis for modern democracies as these non-democratic features are typically built through democratic processes – one example being post-Kemalist Turkey.

Let me note at this point that while a hybrid regime can display neo-liberal authoritarian characteristics, not all regimes that do are hybrid. Following my discussion in Chapter 1 of Gilbert and Mohseni's three dimensions of hybridity, issues of civil liberties and competitiveness primarily inform us about the level or quality of democracy – i.e. whether and how institutions serve their purported functions – and not necessarily about the existence of formal institutions of guardianship alongside electoral institutions.

Even if on the whole it appears more difficult for self-declared guardians to maintain monopoly control over the fate of entire nations, this is not to suggest that guardianship is disappearing “as a powerful vision and the strongest competitor to the democratic vision” in the twenty-first century (Dahl 1989: 64). Rather, it is becoming more subtle and more frequently observable in hybrid arrangements alongside democratic institutions or within democratic systems in the shape of ‘quasi-guardianship’ institutions. Recent crises of authoritarianism in the Middle East and democracy in the West remind us of the enduring relevance of guardianship and hybrid regimes in the twenty-first century. In the Middle East, Egypt appears to be evolving into Turkish-style hybridity, where power will be contested between the military and civilians in the years to come. In Europe, especially in countries such as Italy and Greece, crises of crony capitalism and the failures and scandals associated with democratic politics have led to the emergence of both the politics of mass discontent and government by technocrats.

Consequently, there is ample room for further research both into the political dynamics of hybrid regimes and into determining the impact of quasi- or supra-guardianship institutions on the ‘quality’ of modern democracies. Is not the European Union essentially a ‘supra-guardianship’ institution? What role do quasi-guardianship institutions – such as the British civil service, the US Supreme Court or ‘independent’ central banks – play in curbing the populist

tendencies of modern representative democracies, protecting civil liberties and the rules of competition, and at what cost for democratic legitimacy? These questions inevitably entail an ongoing discussion of the dynamics of interaction and legitimation between popular and elite rule; a discussion that I have endeavoured to contribute to with this thesis.

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